

Feng Yu Jiu Tian

volume 12

(Young Phoenix's Early Cry)

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CHAPTER 1

The morning sun spread across the soundly sleeping face, bringing warmth and comfort.

Feng Ming opened his eyes, half asleep he accepted the last night feeling he had endured – a residual trace of numbness was felt from his lower back. His eyes swept the entire room.

Looking around, his eyes rested upon the person next to him, the face of Xi Lei King appeared within his sight.

“Are you secretly watching me?”

“Secretly watching? I am looking at you in an upstanding way.” Rong Tian stretched out a finger and pointed at his nose.

Lying on the same bed as Feng Ming, Rong Tian was turned on his side, his head resting on a propped arm, looking at his lover.

Feng Ming softly patted the hand that had just touched his nose, “You didn’t sleep all night?”

“Who said that? I always wake up earlier than you, little slacker.”

“Rong Tian.”

“Ah?...”

"Your eyes...are bloodshot." Feng Ming copied Rong Tian and stretched out his index finger to point at his impeccable shaped nose, proudly saying, "Lying in my presence, I caught you red-handed, right?!"

As a dignified King of Xi Lei, perhaps Feng Ming is the only one who dares to point at him so casually.

Like a small rabbit raising its paw, intimidating a lion within the jungle.

Rong Tian didn't hesitate to grasp the white soft hand, while frowning he said, "How come you are suddenly smarter today?"

"Are you still reluctant to leave me?" Feng Ming nestled within the large chest and broad shoulders.

Rong Tian's body temperature always seems to be higher than his.

Nice and warm.

Feng Ming suddenly whispered, "In the past, I used my title as Crown Prince to head to Fan Jia and before leaving, you didn't want to see me, which made me incredibly sad. Now I realize that not meeting during the moment of separation is better, then it wouldn't be so painful..."

"You fool." Rong Tian laughed out loud while looking adoringly at him, "Wait until I finish my mission and I'll come find you. It won't be long until then so there is no need to feel sad, alright?"

Feng Ming gently hummed in response, closely snuggling in Rong Tian's arms and remained silent.

The two of them embraced each other, looking outside the window as the sun continued to rise, the world slowly waking up, the sound of footsteps from outside was faintly heard....

The time they had together was not much, but one second cannot be turned into one day, and one day cannot be changed into one year.

Just like the calm, quiet tides, if there were no disturbance then the time would stop at this moment forever.

But a wish is only a wish, in a short while, the footsteps had stopped in front of the door.

The familiar voices of the maids were heard, "Your Majesty, Duke Ming, we've come to serve you."

The door was cautiously opened, sunlight followed in, spreading across the room, the silence from before quickly ceased.

Though Rong Tian was not willing to, he had to remove Feng Ming from his embrace and got up from the bed; smiling, he said, "Has Zi Yan arranged all the preparations already?"

"I'm here!" Zi Yan appeared at the doorway in a traveling outfit. His calves were tightly tied in a meticulous way, a dagger was hidden on his waist. A simple baggage was carried over his back, his upper and lower body were physically fit. Facing Rong Tian, he reported, "Your Majesty, everything is prepared. We can start our journey."

Feng Ming was feeling anxious inside.

After coming to this time period, even though the time together with Rong Tian was less and separation had been long, those times of separation were unexpected so he had never experienced the feeling of seeing his lover heading off.

No matter how much mental preparation was done in advance, in this moment he realized how painful this indescribable feeling was...

Chiu Lan handed Rong Tian a prepared outfit, "Your Majesty, these are the clothing that a regular business person usually dresses, allow me to help you wear it."

Rong Tian nodded, Chiu Yue walked over beside Chiu Lan to help dress Rong Tian.

Feng Ming watched him standing there, being waited on by the two maids, his tall handsome stature, calmly raising his arms and legs, emitting an unique majestic appeal, the more he watched him the more his heartbeat quickened.

At this moment, he realized how important Rong Tian was to him.

As long as Rong Tian was next to him, he didn't need to be afraid or worry about anything.

Without Rong Tian around, no matter how many people are around him, it would be useless.

"What are you staring at?" Rong Tian turned his head to look around, suddenly catching Feng Ming's gaze, knowing that he was worried, Rong Tian deliberately got his attention.

Feng Ming was startled, he went silent for a moment before smiling at Rong Tian. Taking in a long breath, he regained his spirit and jumped off the bed, adjusted his belt and then yelled out, "Chiu Xing, come over here, select a beautiful looking outfit for Duke Ming. This time, while traveling, I want to display my magnificent, prowess demeanor."

"Yes, Duke Ming!" Chiu Xing rushed over to serve him.

Once the two of them finished dressing, everyone else was present.

Rong Hu and Lie Er were the first ones to enter, Lie Zhong Liu followed after bringing along Lie Zhong Shi and Lie Dou, the two big men who love to quarrel.

Feng Ming was curious and asked Lie Zhong Liu, "How come I don't see Lady Lie?"

Lie Zhong Liu smiled and replied, "She had been looking forward to having a smart disciple and after finding one, she immediately started inculcating him with her teachings."

"Before dawn, Qian Lin was dragged off from his bed by Lady Lie." Rong Hu added.

Lie Er burst out laughing, "That's right, his master was pinching his ears and scolding him. As a successor to the Wei's Art of War and yet he dares to sleep in. This time, Qian Lin is in big trouble."

"You shouldn't accuse innocent Qian Lin. That time, it was obvious the sun wasn't out yet, he has always been punctual and follow the rules on getting up."

"But according to his master, he must get up an hour before dawn. Haha, from today onward, Qian Lin will be completely pitiful."

Feng Ming stuck out his tongue.

Must get up an hour before dawn? Luckily, he is not as talented and clever as Qian Lin and wasn't chosen to be the successor to the Wei's Art of War, otherwise, he will never be able to have a good night sleep again.

The cruel torture of being dragged from under the blankets made him remember Dong Fan 13th Captain, Jun Ting.

"Your Majesty, are you ready?" Lie Zhong Liu looked over at Rong Tian.

Rong Tian stretched out his arms and turned in a circle to show Lie Zhong Liu the outfit he was wearing, "What do you think, Prime Minister?"

Lie Zhong Liu carefully scanned it, nodded his head and said, "Ah, a simple outfit, it's great that we have regular traders around here that do business with Zhao Bei. An outfit like that should be acceptable."

Rong Tian laughed, "If Prime Minister sees no flaws in it, then it should be no problem."

Feng Ming scratched his head.

Yesterday, both of them were staring down at each other, so how come their relationship suddenly became relatively close?

Lie Zhong Liu's gaze switched over to Zi Yan, "The outfit Zi Yan is wearing right now is completely different from the armor outfit."

"Prime Minister, Zi Yan looks great like this, right? His broad shoulders, strong chest, do you want to touch a bit?" Lie Er draped his arms over Zi Yan's shoulders, using a meat inspector voice, he laughed out.

Zi Yan was not pleased as he tossed Lie Er's arm aside and scolded him, "Quit it Lie Er, go die!"

"Ah, it's not bad." Lie Zhong Liu glanced at Lie Er and continued, "But the beauty that I, the Prime Minister, is fond of, is still you, Lie Er."

His teasing statement clearly brought uproar among everyone.

Chiu Yue and Chiu Xing stood up together at once, "We're going to complain! We're going to tell Lady Lie, we'll definitely tell her about this!"

Seeing them chatter in enthusiasm, Feng Ming laughed nonstop, he silently thought that they must be worried he might be sad about separating from Rong Tian; therefore, they deliberately joked around to lighten up his mood.

It was emotionally touching for him.

He had come to this ancient world for some time and now was more familiar with it each passing day. In the past, he wouldn't pay much attention to everyone's behavior, but now he gradually came to understand the hidden meaning behind each one. The group of people in front of him grew close to him as if they were his loved ones.

Even if it's only for these people in front of him, he still wishes to bring peace and harmony to them.

The laughter ceased, Zi Yan looked up at the sky, then faced Rong Tian and said, "Your Majesty, we shouldn't..." The words were still not finished when he paused and glanced over at Feng Ming.

Feng Ming clenched his teeth, revealing a bright smile, "It's no longer early, it's time for departure, afterwards, there is still a long road ahead, do you still plan on waiting until nighttime to leave?"

The whole room went silent...

After a while, Lie Zhong Liu asked, "Does Your Majesty still want to speak with Feng Ming in private?"

Everyone were intending to head outside the room in order to let Feng Ming have some time alone with Rong Tian.

“No.” Feng Ming shook his head, seeing everyone’s shocked face looking at him, he stomped his foot, “It’s not anything like life and death, so what’s the point in prolonging this? As a man, if you say you leave then leave. What else is there to continue talking privately about?”

Before he finished, Rong Tian reached out and pulled the young man next to him, gave him an intense kiss on the lips, then chuckled, “Not bad, before leaving, you already displayed a demeanor fit for Young Master Xiao. However, as a man, after I leave, you are not allowed to cry. Take care of yourself, here I go.”

Lifting his head, he gave his farewell, his bright eyes sparkled as he bellowed out, “Here I go!”

“Your Majesty, take care!”

Rong Hu said, “Your Majesty, let us send you outside...”

“No need for the customary etiquette. Just stay here and look after Duke Ming, take care of yourself. Prime Minister, please take care.” Facing Lie Zhong Liu, Rong Tian clasped his hands together and smiled. Rong Tian motioned his hand and ordered, “Zi Yan, let’s head out!”

Xi Lei King proudly laughed and quickly strode out the door.

Zi Yan, full of energy, followed right behind. The two of them walked off...

CHAPTER 2

After Rong Tian left, there was only one “Wang” present in Yue Zhong.

(*Note: Wang is a royal title with different meanings. Both Rong Tian and Feng Ming are addressed as “Wang”, for Rong Tian – it is “King” and for Feng Ming it is “Duke”)

Fearing that the others might be worried, Feng Ming refused to display any signs of sadness; instead he pretended to look forward to his trip.

Rong Hu already knew that Feng Ming was unhappy, so he secretly went to ask the Prime Minister for an advice on what to do.

LZL: Since he has made the decision, it’s only natural for him to feel depressed. Deciding to travel through the nations, hoping to become a more free and clever person without relying on his reputation as “Xi Lei King’s lover” or in His Majesty’s protection, it’s not so easy. In the past,

when Duke Ming had an argument with Empress Dowager regarding finding a Queen for His Majesty, didn't he make a powerful statement? Something like a fish and bear paw*, you can't choose both. You can use his own statement to help comfort him.

(Note: This line originated from Meng Zi/Mencius "Fish is something I desire; bear's paw is also something I desire. If I cannot have both, I will forsake fish and select bear's paw.)

After listening to what Rong Hu reported, Chiu Yue angrily clenched her teeth, "I can't believe there is someone as heartless as him. There are lots of people distressed for Duke Ming, while he has the nerve to say something sarcastic."

Chiu Xing nodded and added, "That's right, we only knew he was heartless and vulgar, overall, he's just a bit more clever than some people."

LE: However, I think what Prime Minister said is reasonable.

Chiu Yue and Chiu Xing stared at Lie Er in dissatisfaction.

Worried that they might quarrel, Chiu Lan quickly walked over to intervene; "Duke Ming is currently not in a good mood, if all of you were to argue, and Duke Ming finds out, he'll be more upset."

After what she said, they stopped their argument.

LE: I'm going to see Duke Ming.

Inside the room, Feng Ming was looking for something to do but couldn't think of anything. Vaguely hearing someone outside the room, which sounded like Lie Er, he ran out to see. He sighed in relief and said, "Where did all of you go? I'm so bored here by myself."

They all went inside the room. Since Rong Tian was not there, they were more unrestrained than usual and looked for a place to sit comfortably. Chiu Yue sat next to the bed, seeing that there was a baggage there, she chuckled, "Is this baggage something that Duke Ming prepared by yourself? This isn't how it's done. If this were to be carried up and down, it'll be tiresome."

Chiu Xing came from behind to take a look and also laughed, "This really looks like someone was feeling eager to travel!"

FM: Does it really look bad? But I feel that the way I made it is not bad.

When Rong Tian and him were together, they were always in high spirits. Now that Rong Tian is gone, Feng Ming felt that 30% of his soul was taken away. Although he is still smiling and laughing, he feels a bit depressed.

CL: Duke Ming is not a regular person, do you have to prepare your own baggage? Your clothing and such, just let us handle them.”

Feng Ming shook his head, “It’s just simple day to day items, stuff that Rong Tian left behind. I had nothing to do so I decided to put them all together and wrapped them up so they won’t get dirty.”

LE: Duke Ming, I came here to bid my farewell.

FM: That quick?

LE: With this important matter, it’s best to complete them earlier to feel at ease. Once I’m done with my packing, I will immediately hit the road.”

Feng Ming looked at Lie Er up and down, with eyes full of sadness, he whispered, “If there are some unexpected incidents, you don’t need to settle them, just take good care of yourself first.”

Lie Er smiled and said, “Besides Yong Yi, the entire Yong Yin royalties are a bunch of useless junk, what kind of unexpected incident would happen? Duke Ming, rest assured I promise you that you’ll be hearing good news soon.” Facing Feng Ming, he gave a sign of farewell, turning over to Rong Hu, he nodded and casually said, “Brother, I’m leaving. Duke Ming is left in your hands. That’s right, if you receive a message from me requesting for money, then immediately have someone send it to me.”

RH: Rest assured, Prime Minister already ordered to give you as much as you need. But it is Duke Ming’s wealth, you’re not allowed to squander carelessly.

LE: Who’s squandering? Are you saying that I don’t have my own money? Even if I don’t, Yong Yi will not let me starve.

Lie Er made a face and blatantly walked off. Feng Ming walked him out the main door, “Now that Lie Er is gone, when can I actually start my trip?”

Rong Hu, who was responsible for this matter, reported, “I have sent someone to contact Luo Deng, other than the fleet of ships, we also need to wait for Master Xiao’s elite men to come. After ensuring enough security, Duke Ming will be ready to leave.”

FM: How long will that take?

RH: The earliest would be four to five days.

FM: Four to five days? (Feng Ming had a face like he was crying) Rong Tian is not here, Lie Er is also gone, Zi Yan and the rest went with Rong Tian. This is like the time I’ve been confined inside the Prince’s Quarters, being bored to death.

RH: (frowning) How are you bored to death? Duke Ming has many things to do. I'm afraid that these four or five days may pass quickly. I still have many things to prepare. I'll take my leave first, Duke Ming."

Feng Ming held onto Rong Hu's arm tightly, asking curiously, "You just said that I have many things to do?"

RH: Didn't Prime Minister mentioned it to you?

FM: Like what...?"

"Duke Ming..." Chiu Yue carefully poked Feng Ming in the back, "Duke Ming, look in front of you, there are two bozos there."

Feng Ming looked up.

Sure enough, appearing within his view were the towering figures of Lie Zhong Shi and Lie Dou.

Lie Zhong Shi came to send a message on behalf of Lie Zhong Liu.

"My brother said that in preparation for Duke Ming's travel, you have to complete some very simple things."

Lie Zhong Shi followed Feng Ming inside the room. Word by word, he repeated what Lie Zhong Liu had instructed him with, "Duke Ming will travel through many different nations and will encounter many different people. They will ask Duke Ming many questions upon arrival. What Duke Ming needs to do right now is to think of good responses for those questions, do not fall into moments of hesitation, not knowing what to say or replying with a wrong response, arousing ridicule."

This person's voice was no different from a large bell. Even though he was speaking normally, it was so loud that it shook the roof, causing dust particles to drop below.

Feng Ming nodded in agreement and said, "Ah, Prime Minister thoroughly thought about this, I'm most fearful of riddles."

Especially if they're not carefully answered, a wrong answer can cause several nations to dispute over sensitive issues.

That year, his weak heart could not withstand the pressure.

Chiu Lan frowned and said, "How can we know what the other person would ask?"

“This you don’t have to worry,” Lie Zhong Shi answered bluntly and then grinned, “My brother had already prepared several questions, Duke Ming only needs to write them down on paper and think one by one about the answer.”

Feng Ming was overjoyed, Lie Zhong Liu really has a strong sense of obligation, without a bit of effort and yet he already prepared everything. He quickly ordered Chiu Yue to fetch the brush and paper. Sitting in a ready position, he focused hard, waiting for Lie Zhong Shi to say the first word.

“Then I’ll begin, you have to write it all down.”

“Please start!”

LZS: The first question, Xi Lei King Rong Tian doesn’t have a status anymore, so what status is Duke Ming using to travel throughout the nations? Does your title as Duke Ming need to be removed? You have to know, Duke Ming is a title Rong Tian has given you, and since Rong Tian lost the throne, your title as Duke Ming no longer have it’s practical significance.

FM: Ah, I know this, if they ask me, I will answer...

“No need to rush.” Lie Zhong Shi is a tall uncouth person, but he’s very good at imitating the actions of others. Crossing his arms, he followed Lie Zhong Liu’s movements, “Duke Ming needs to write down every questions and then slowly think of an answer for them.”

“Er, alright.”

“The second question...”

"The third question"

"The fourth"

"The fifth"

Two hours later...

“So how many more questions...” Chiu Yue yawned, asking Chiu Xing who was also yawning beside her.

“Who knows?” Chiu Xing sat there in a daze, “Oh mother, this Lie Zhong Shi must be some sort of strange being. That many questions and yet he can remember them clearly?”

Standing in front of the desk, Lie Zhong Shi was still the same, with a loud voice he continued to recite, “The 97th question; Dan Lin is not a part of the continent, but is a separate island itself, what does Xi Lei King think about the policy of this nation compared to the others?”

At the beginning, Feng Ming was full of spirit, but now he looked like he was hit by a storm, and suffered mercilessly, Lie Zhong Liu is not a human ~ Giving out so many questions, did he intend to pick on him while Rong Tian is not here?

He thought that Lie Zhong Shi came to pass a message and the questions would be no more than 10 questions, who would expect it to be as long as the Yellow River, forever flowing endlessly?

On the table were pieces of paper disorderly placed, if one were to organize them, it would be as thick as a book.

Finishing up the 97th question, Lie Zhong Shi's voice rang out again, "Question 98th..."

"There's more?" Feng Ming began to shake.

Chiu Lan saw his pathetic state and his written words becoming more and more jumbled, so she softly said, "Duke Ming seems to be tired, allow your servant to help write for you."

Receiving the brush in hand, she neatly wrote down the questions.

Chiu Xing brought over hot tea and requested Feng Ming to take a rest, Chiu Yue couldn't take it any longer and asked, "Hey, how many total questions did Prime Minister send for Duke Ming?"

Feng Ming raised his ears to listen.

Judging by Lie Zhong Liu's strange personality, he shouldn't have prepared a thick encyclopedia for him, did he?

If that's the case, then there is no need for him to travel, he just have to stay inside this room, live through it and die while staying here.

Lie Zhong Shi honestly replied, "One hundred."

"Oh..." Feng Ming let out a sigh of relief.

Thankfully it's not several thousands.

"However..."

"There is a however?" Feng Ming nervously chuckled, feeling relieved a second ago and now he had to tense up again.

"... Brother said after you finished writing down the questions, he will inquire about your responses the day after, therefore, Duke Ming has to think carefully about your answers starting today."

“He will inquire about my answers?”

Oh, well that is expected.

Moreover, he has two days and one night to think about the answers. If he can't think of any, he can always ask Rong Hu and the others for help. It shouldn't be considered cheating, hehe.

The one hundred questions were finally written down, Lie Zhong Liu apparently gave Lie Zhong Shi other errands to do. After finishing the 100 questions, he hurried off while bringing along Lie Dou and Little Autumn with him.

Both the left and right side of the table were filled with white papers with the questions written on them.

Chiu Yue and Chiu Xing went over to see, “It looks like Duke Ming won't be bored any longer.”

“The answers to these one hundred questions, just writing them would make one's hand sore.”

“That's right and Duke Ming writes very slow.”

Feng Ming stared at the large pile of papers, he felt an oncoming throbbing headache.

FM: Well, I'll write. Ever since I've stepped into this pugilist world, what's there to be afraid of? These few minor problems? Chiu Yue, Chiu Xing, prepare the ink.

He lifted up his sleeve, sat down at the desk in an upright position and seriously thought about how to answer these questions.

Rong Tian is gone, Lie Er also left Yue Zhong, no one is there now to disturb Feng Ming's strenuous studious session.

Feng Ming dipped his brush into the ink, struggling to answer several questions, anxiously wondering which response would be best since each nation's relations are complicated and not knowing them clearly made him think about the question even longer.

However, occasionally he would have a sudden flash and would immediately write down the answer on paper, while expressing a merry smile of satisfaction on his face.

Sure enough, a person's ability to survive is revealed once he is forced to reach the last step, being far from Rong Tian, his little lazy brain started to work harder.

In the evening, Rong Hu finished his own errands and returned, just when he stepped into the room, he first noticed Feng Ming working hard, scratching his head to think, so Rong Hu decided to give some praise, “Duke Ming is working hard, did Prime Minister arranged for a lot of work for you?”

“Rong Hu, you came at the right time.” Feng Ming let go of his brush, happily grabbed Rong Hu towards the desk, and pointed to the answer he just written, “Come here and read this answer I wrote in reply to Dong Fan King offering his kingdom.”

“Alright.”

Rong Hu picked up the paper, there were ink-stains on top of it, reflecting some light, which was obvious that it was just written and is still wet.

“There are three reasons why Dong Fan King offered Dong Fan to Rong Tian...” Rong Hu looked at it while murmuring, “The first reason is because Dong Fan experienced a plague, their troops were unable to protect them; the second reason, there were two factions divided within Dong Fan, Advisor Lu Dan was worried that after he left, the rebellious faction would threaten Dong Fan King and usurp the throne; the third reason is...”

“The third reason is because they are optimistic about the strength and capacity of Rong Tian and I.” Feng Ming answer for himself, feeling very satisfied about his answer, proudly raising his head.

Rong Hu nodded, “Troops, dignitaries, along with trust, can be considered an orderly answer.”

Chiu Yue and Chiu Xing sneered at Feng Ming from the sideline, “Duke Ming is very impressive, ha? Even taking his lunch and eating it on the desk, thinking while eating, so far he only answered 13 questions.”

“There’s more.” Chiu Lan shook her head, “The ink almost dried up too, oh Duke Ming, there was a point when he didn’t take a glance off from his papers, and not even taking time to eat. But I don’t care, tonight’s dinner you are not allowed to eat next to your desk. You have to finish eating before working again.”

Feng Ming couldn’t win against her. That evening, he was dragged to the dining room to eat. After eating he immediately went to continue writing until the three maids repeatedly urged him to go to sleep.

Just like that, two days and one night went by, Feng Ming and his maids were busy staying up late and in the end, finally finished.

“All done! Hooray!”

After writing 100 responses, Feng Ming felt like he had completed a major project. With red eyes, he ran wild in the room, excitedly cheering.

Chiu Lan laughed, “Oh heavens, we finally finished, but Prime Minister hasn’t seen them yet, we don’t know whether he’ll approve them or not.”

Feng Ming solemnly said, "Either way, I have poured all my heart and soul to complete them, if it's not 80% then 60% will do. Wait until Prime Minister comes here, read one page of my response, he'll have to give me at least a praise on effort."

"Duke Ming, take a look! Those two are back again!" Chiu Yue suddenly pointed out at the window, shouting, "Little Autumn, Little Autumn, come over here!"

Little Autumn was on top of Lie Zhong Shi's shoulders, along with Lie Dou stepped forward. After seeing Chiu Yue several times, Little Autumn gradually became close to her, hearing her call, Little Autumn responded, jumping down from Lie Zhong Shi's shoulder, across the window and into Chiu Yue's arms, waving its tail to greet her.

"Lie Zhong Shi, I have answered all the one hundred questions!" Feng Ming was busy for so long, his mood was lifted and he was feeling very satisfied about his accomplishment, waiting for his teacher to give his approval. Seeing Lie Zhong Shi entered, he grabbed him and said, "Come, you and I will go together to see Prime Minister and see if he's satisfied with my answers."

Lie Dou shook his head, "No need to go! No need to go!"

Feng Ming feeling surprised asked, "Why not?"

"The elder master said, if we smell the scent of ink when entering the door, then we just need to take a look at one answer alone."

"Ah? Just one answer?" Chiu Yue was surprised, "Just one?"

Lie Zhong Shi was the number one person in reporting messages, Lie Zhong Liu wanted him to convey his every words, "The 13th question, why did Dong Fan King offer his kingdom?"

"Why Dong Fan King offered his kingdom? Ah, ah, I know, wait for me a bit." Feng Ming went to the desk, and searched through the stack of papers. After a while, he pulled out a sheet, "I've found it! This is it! The answer to why Dong Fan King offered his kingdom."

Who would have thought that with just one glance, Lie Zhong Shi casually said, "It's all wrong."

Feng Ming was stunned, "Wrong?"

It's not right?

That can't be, it should at least pass or meet the expectations, right?

Chiu Xing was in grievance for Feng Ming, "You big man shouldn't talk nonsense, you didn't even read all of it, how can Duke Ming got it all wrong?"

"That's right! You haven't even read it!"

Lie Zhong Shi shrugged his shoulders, with a helpless look, he replied, "My brother said, the answer is just two words. He wrote so many words like this, of course it's wrong."

"What? Two words?" Chiu Lan curiously asked.

Lie Dou who was standing nearby answered, "Those two words are: Heaven's Will (Destiny)"

"Heaven's will?" Feng Ming started scratching his head.

Well...that is a complete answer...

Indeed, an answer that only Lie Zhong Liu can think of.

But why is it Heaven's Will?

"The message my brother asked me to send, I have completed it. I will be going now."

Feng Ming quickly asked, "Prime Minister doesn't have anything else to tell me?"

"Yes, my brother said that he is very busy, Duke Ming does not need to disturb him."

"Ah?"

He was planning on finding Lie Zhong Liu to ask about the matter clearly..

Chiu Yue was reluctant for Little Autumn to leave, while playing with it, she said, "Can Little Autumn stay here to play with us?"

Before she could finish, Little Autumn understood what she said and it cried out, scared of being left behind, it suddenly jumped onto Lie Zhong Shi's shoulders, tightly clutching on his clothes, giving a deadly stare of not wanting to be left behind.

Chiu Yue and Chiu Xing let out an annoying sigh.

Waiting until Lie Zhong Shi left, Feng Ming turned back to look at the mess on the table, his "accomplishment" sitting there as a sense of frustration started to build up.

It was a rare moment for him to put in so much effort, if Rong Tian was here, he didn't know if Rong Tian would have praised him. Lie Zhong Liu didn't even take one look, he even told his people to help pass a message and with one answer, he rejected everything.

What a cruel teacher...

Seeing how unhappy Feng Ming was, Chiu Lan tried to comfort him, "Duke Ming, I'll arrange this for you."

“Duke Ming doesn’t need to be sad like this, no matter what, the task Prime Minister gave you is now completed. Duke Ming didn’t even have any leisure time and was not lazy, we can testify to it.” Chiu Xing and Chiu Yue chimed in.

Rong Hu happened to come in at this time, noticing that the atmosphere was not right, he curiously asked, “What happened?”

CL: It’s Prime Minister. Duke Ming had worked hard on writing the answers and yet he didn’t even bother to take a look. He even said he was busy, telling Duke Ming not to disturb him.

After listening to Chiu Lan, Rong Hu pondered for a moment before speaking, “His Majesty had said before, Prime Minister has his own ways of doing things, ‘swordplay has many hidden mysteries, unfathomable, the way of the sword is just like a stroke of a brush with hidden meanings.’ Heaven’s will...these two words, they look simple, but in fact, contains deep meaning. Maybe Duke Ming needs to ponder a bit more about Prime Minister’s words.”

Feng Ming sat straight on the chair. After listening to Rong Hu, he regained his conscience, silently nodding, “Heaven’s will...”

In preparation for the upcoming trip, without Rong Tian by his side, he will have to use his brain and focus hard to understand Lie Zhong Liu’s teaching.

The next few days, Lie Zhong Liu did not appear at all.

Feng Ming listened carefully to Rong Hu’s suggestion, rereading all one hundred questions by Lie Zhong Liu once more, and pondering hard about the meaning behind “Heaven’s will.”

“Comparing to His Majesty, Prime Minister sure knows how to make one obediently listen to him.”

In a short time, the plan to travel through the nations was in front of their eyes.

After five days, the people who have been sent returned with a response message.

Luo Deng will lead a big fleet of Master Xiao’s ships to the nearest pier not far from Yue Zhong within four days to await further orders. By that time, the group of Master Xiao’s elite men will also have arrived to escort the well-known Young Master on his way.

“The big day has finally arrived!”

Rong Hu got the message, rushing over to Feng Ming, he reported, “Prime Minister also received the news. Prime Minister said that the mountains have a shortcut and will lead us to the pier just in time to meet up with Luo Deng in four days.”

Chiu Yue exclaimed, “Then shouldn’t we head out today?”

“Yes, starting today.”

The long-awaited journey that everyone had been looking forward to has finally started!”

Everyone was thrilled, bursting out in an uproar.

Just thinking about starting the journey, Feng Ming was excited no less, his eyes lit up, “Great! All of you have prepared all the baggage, I also have nothing to prepare. We’ll just bid Prime Minister goodbye. However, if we meet, he might ask about the meaning behind the words “Heaven’s will,” how will I reply? He definitely loves to ask me those types of questions...” He frowned, “I have thought about it for several days and I vaguely understand it, but if he tells me to explain it, I wouldn’t know what to say.”

“Duke Ming, rest assured.” Rong Hu laughed, “I have just told him that you might find him to bid farewell, Prime Minister said that there’s no need to. As for the meaning behind “Heaven’s will,” he wants Duke Ming to just follow your instincts, you don’t need to worry about your decisions. Success and failure is up to Heaven’s will, no need to worry too much. As for his meaning, Duke Ming will understand it during this trip.”

Feng Ming was surprised and asked, “Prime Minister just said to start going? No need to bid him farewell?”

“That’s right.”

At this time, Lie Zhong Shi brought Little Autumn and Lie Dou along.

This two large men along with their little creature are inseparable, always appearing and leaving together, just like Siamese children.

The two of them were carrying baggages on their shoulders, not large but not small, there were no similarities in shapes and sizes, even the color was different. The one on Lie Zhong Shi’s shoulder was black, and the color of the baggage for Lie Dou was red, which were the same as their clothing.

Lie Dou saw Feng Ming and quickly said, “Our elder master said, Duke Ming can start travelling today, no need to bid him farewell since we will meet each other soon.”

Feng Ming was like a child leaving his home on his first journey, he was hoping for a scene where everyone would line up and bid farewell, but yet found out that Lie Zhong Liu wasn’t even intending to see him off, just “kicking him out the door” making him feel a bit lost.

Lie Zhong Shi secretly observed his facial expression, then he suddenly laughed, “My brother said, if Duke Ming looked like he is sad, just tell him...”

“Tell me what?” Feng Ming suddenly raised his head.

“My brother asked me to pass the message, once Duke Ming steps outside of Yue Zhong, he has to take on a manly endeavor to stand within the world, Duke Ming’s reliance on others must be exterminated because everyone’s life is now within Duke Ming’s hands, do you understand?”

Feng Ming came to a realization as he nodded, “I understand!”

Lie Zhong Liu is right. The reason why he wanted to meet Lie Zhong Liu was because he was feeling uneasy and felt psychologically dependent on him. He had been under Rong Tian’s strict protectiveness for too long, but now he has to make his own decisions. Leaving Yue Zhong, everything will be different, he can’t rely on others since they will now rely on him.

He has the responsibility of looking after the life and death of those who follow him.

This is a very huge responsibility.

“Since we don’t need to bid farewell to Prime minister, then Duke Ming, we should start heading out!”

Feng Ming nodded his head grimly, revealing a sense of determination. His eyes slowly turned toward the main gate, and shouted out, “All my followers, head towards Aman River – let’s head out!” Under the surging passion, using a Beijing opera voice, Feng Ming roared out into the distance.

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"AH!" Tong Er, lying on Xi Lei King’s dragon bed screamed out, waking up with his forehead drenched in sweat.

His trembling hand rubbed his ice cold forehead, his hands covered in cold sweat.

The sound of panic footsteps quickly rushed forward and stopped in front of the door.

“Your Majesty, are you alright?”

Tong Er was distracted for a moment before recognizing the voice of his confidante who was with him during his childhood times within the Tong residence; he exhaled a breath of air, “Come in, what time is it right now?”

“Replying to Your Majesty, it’s already morning.” Uncle Zhang calmly walked his body over, lifting the silk screen within the King’s palace, the bright sunlight shone through the room onto Tong Er, suddenly blinding him that he had to raise his hand to block out the light.

Uncle Zhang glanced over at Tong Er’s face with his cloudy eyes, “Your Majesty, did you have another nightmare?”

Tong Er nodded his head. These past nights he had been restless. His face was pale with loss of spirit, suddenly with a violent voice he yelled, "Those physicians are all useless, they can't do anything. Prescribing so many different sedative medications, but not a bit effective. I'm still experiencing nightmares, if I still can't have a peaceful sleep tonight, I will definitely execute that Physician surnamed Chu and make his head fly!"

"Your Majesty, you must not." Uncle Zhang slowly spoke out, "He is a close relative, a nephew of the veteran General Chu, if you kill him, you will greatly offend General Chu."

Tong Er impatiently grunted, "I am the Great King, and yet I can't mess with an old man? That old fool Chu Xiao who is reluctant to die, he is of old age, he should hand over his military power and retire at home peacefully. Yet every single day he would drag his half-dead, half-living self over to the court hall. I've sent my countless military cronies within the army, but he sent them all in mad confusion, he clearly doesn't have what it takes to hold onto military power. From what I see, he deliberately wants to piss me off!" His eyes flashing fiercely.

"Your Majesty, you are the King, there are future opportunities to deal with this Chu Xiao." Uncle Zhang had taken care of this young master since he was young, no matter how angry Tong Er was, he still calmly spoke with him, "Let's deal with this in the future. As of right now, Your Majesty cannot offend General Chu, especially if Rong Tian decides to return and mobilize a siege. We still need to rely on these people to deal with Rong Tian. Once we successfully dealt with Rong Tian, it still isn't late for Your Majesty to deal with them. If you were to create tension, it will only be unfavorable for you."

Perhaps Uncle Zhang's tone of voice helped Tong Er calm down a bit. Tong Er listened quietly to his words, slowly extinguishing the anger inside. Lowering his head to think for a moment, he sighed and then said, "Alright, I will first deal with Rong Tian, afterwards, I will get rid of them one by one." His merciless expression appeared in his eyes.

For a short while, he glanced over at Uncle Zhang and whispered, "Uncle Zhang, every night I would have nightmares, always in a state of confusion. I would always dream of killing scenes where Rong Tian is holding a sword and stabbing straight at me, piercing through my body, even pulling out my heart upon withdrawal... Do you believe that Rong Tian would attack Xi Lei? If he does attack...where would he find a large army to attack our big nation?"

Ever since growing up, he had looked up and admired Rong Tian, he even followed Rong Tian and learned swordplay from him, so he's very clear of Rong Tian's ability.

The Xi Lei King whom he stole the throne from, is more fearsome than any other person he knew. From the time he heard that Rong Tian was not dead, he never had a peaceful day.

If he knew being a Great King would have him be fearful each day, being restrained by ministers and officials, unlike the time when he indulged himself as Young Master Tong, then he wouldn't

have listened to that “Yu” person and conspired with Lu Dan to capture Feng Ming, and seize the throne from Rong Tian.

If he knew about this earlier, he wouldn’t have done so.

His mother was Xi Lei’s Princess, and his father was a person within the Tong family, a genuine noble with royal blood.

From the time he was young, there was someone in the family who told him, he had the chance of inheriting the Xi Lei throne in the future because comparing to the Crown Prince within the Xi Lei Palace, he was much more capable.

At that time, he didn’t understand what the throne meant, what was the right of inheritance, but that one line he always remembered – compared to the Crown Prince, he was much more capable!

The Crown Prince?

An He?

How can An He be compared to him?

An He was a timid, stupid, coward, weakling. All of the shortcomings that anyone can have in the world were all placed onto him, a pitiful soul who was hidden in the depths of Xi Lei palace, even his own mother, the Queen, didn’t like him.

The only praise An He had, was his face. However, after Tong Er accidentally saw Rong Tian forcing An He beneath his body behind the screen, he was shocked nonetheless. It was then that he realized, even with a pretty face, it wasn’t really a positive point.

A Crown Prince being played around like an object?

Xi Lei King’s monarchy, would he have to fall into the hands of such a vile person?

Any Xi Lei person would be reluctant to have such a King like that.

Therefore, while An He was walking alone in the garden, Tong Er pushed him into the lake. He never imagined that that one second of mischief he made, would create a huge catastrophe.

In his eyes, drowning An He was no different than crushing a bug.

This bug, who Tong Er wanted so badly to disappear, had been dangling long enough; therefore, Tong Er couldn’t help but give him an unexpected death.

No one should care about a bug.

But the world is constantly changing in ridiculous ways.

After An He was saved, he changed into a completely different person.

Originally, the An He in Rong Tian's eyes was nothing to him, but yet he became valued each day and originally, Tong Er's relationship with Rong Tian was great, but became distant as days passed.

Tong Er had intended that once An He died, he would become the Crown Prince.

Once he ascended the throne, Rong Tian would be his most valued minister, and that Rong Tian could help him become a well-known monarch. He appreciated Rong Tian, worshipped Rong Tian, and respected Rong Tian.

However, the result became a total mess.

An He didn't die, he was rescued, not only that, he was more and more beloved each day. Rong Tian cherished him, the ministers praised his "wisdom," when he went to Fan Jia, he was supposed to be shredded into eight pieces by Fan Jia Princess, the result instead was An He, bringing Fan Jia Princess to Xi Lei and even diffusing the simmering conflict among the two nations.

A clever person who encountered these things would become confused.

Tong Er became confused every day, and in the end, he snapped! Just like a thunderbolt on a sunny day, striking his muddled head – An He wasn't the Crown Prince, An He was not even An He, he was called Feng Ming.

However, the most ridiculous matter was beyond that.

As he expected, Rong Tian, the minister of state he admired, the one he trusted to assist him in becoming a well-known ruler in the world, was actually the true heir to the throne.

"Is Your Majesty regretting it?" Uncle Zhang asked in a whisper.

Tong Er went silent without saying anything.

Regret? It's already too late.

Who told him to take action? To push that An He into the lake?

Who would have thought his little action would be witnessed by a darn maid?

Who would have expected that maid was An He's old lover?

What's even unexpected was that his secret was spread and caught the attention of Lu Dan from the faraway Dong Fan.

The secret letter Lu Dan sent was personally sent to him by Cai Qing, Tong Er was shocked, cold sweat covered his entire body.

In other words, the attempted murder of the Crown Prince, even if he was a substitute, it was a capital offense.

That beautiful Advisor Lu Dan was like a poisonous snake, he only gave Tong Er two choices.

To conspire with Lu Dan, assist him in capturing Feng Ming or the secret he hid from Rong Tian would be exposed.

If that year An He was just a bug, then how could the present day Feng Ming be an untouchable precious treasure of Rong Tian? That year, if he had killed An He, who was Feng Ming, and if that reaches the ears of Rong Tian, what would be his ending?

Tong Er certainly would not choose the road of admitting his crime and surrendering to death.

He was born a noble, he was outstanding and still young.

If he was at fault, then it was only one...no, even two are not a problem. He made up his mind, wrote a letter in reply to Lu Dan, agreeing to work with him, creating a scheme to lure the precious Feng Ming away from Rong Tian, as long as Lu Dan guaranteed to not disclose his secret.

Everything from there on, spiraled out of control.

Everything had gone out of hand. To the point when he slept on the dragon bed, the place where Rong Tian had slept, he continued to have nightmares, frightful ones.

The most beautiful man in the world, this vicious beautiful advisor was dead. Only he is left, an unwilling culprit who chose to protect his life, was suffering night and day from torment, fearing that Rong Tian would seek his revenge.

What kind of karma is this?

"Then can Your Majesty retreat?" Uncle Zhang asked once more in a low tone.

Tong Er coldly answered, "Do I even have the opportunity to retreat?"

"If Your Majesty understands, then that's enough." Uncle Zhang desperately coughed for awhile, holding onto his chest until he finally recovered, he weakly continued, "Those within this palace

can always change their minds, only Your Majesty cannot repent and retreat. Rong Tian can forgive anyone, but will he be willing to spare Your Majesty?"

After listening, Tong Er nodded his head, "I understand." His eyes were still the eyes of a young man, but were unmoved, filled with cold bitterness that were not there before.

"There is also one more thing, your old servant wished to tell Your Majesty."

"What is it?"

"To capture the one who have been causing your nightmares..."

Oh?

"The physicians continuously prescribed medication, but there hasn't been any improvement, your servant believes that it doesn't seem like an illness."

After hearing that, Tong Er felt something wasn't right, he frowned, "If it is not an illness, then what is it?"

"It has to be...someone who's trying to harm Your Majesty? It could be a curse, or some sort of poison..."

"Who dares to do such immoral acts?" Tong Er suddenly stood up in fury, "They dare to..."

"Your Majesty don't need to be in haste, your servant is just speculating..."

Just then a few maids who were waiting outside, preparing the warm water and clothes, entered through the door. Tong Er saw them from the corner of his eyes and shouted, "Who told you to come in? All of you, scram! Someone! Come! Those who dare to trespass inside my chamber, drag them out of here and beat them all to death! Where are the guards? Where are they? Hurry and come here!"

Those maids who realized that punishment will be crushing down on them, trembled with fear. Dropping the items in hand, their whole body fell to the ground as they cried out, "Your Majesty, please have mercy! Please have mercy!"

Not hearing another word, Tong Er called for the guards, ordering them to drag the maids outside to perform the beating.

Uncle Zhang, standing next to him, whispered, "What is Your Majesty angry for? Those maids were rash, just giving them a few whips will be good enough, if you hastily beat them to death, I'm afraid someone might be resentful."

Tong Er's face flashed a moment of hesitation, but after thinking for a moment, he fiercely clenched his teeth and said, "Since I can't take care of a bunch of ministers, does that mean I

can't even teach those lowly maids a lesson? Those maids are just a bunch of worthless crap, not even worth worrying about. As for the thing you just said, I find it very likely." His face changed color, and his tone of voice lowered, "Uncle Zhang, you are my most trusted aide, this matter is related to my life, I'll assign you to investigate it for me."

Being entrusted with the task, Uncle Zhang was quiet before answering slowly, "This matter, should I discuss it with General Tong about it?"

"No need." Tong Er abruptly stopped him, with a sigh, he explained, "From the time I decided to cooperate with King of Li to deal with Rong Tian, my uncle's attitude became increasingly strange. This rare opportunity to attack Rong Tian, my uncle suddenly offered to personally ambush him, I already felt it was strange. Sure enough, not only did the ambush fail, we sacrificed a lot of troops. The entire army was annihilated and yet the main commander returned unscathed, how can that be possible? I believe that he is secretly cooperating with Rong Tian..." Not knowing what came to mind, once the matter was uttered, he suddenly paused.

Tong Er clenched his fist, pacing in a circle twice within his chamber, he suddenly loosened his grip, feeling a bit relaxed, "Forget it, you don't need to bother with that matter, the first thing is to investigate about the origins of my nightmares. If this is due to someone's deliberate attempt of harming me, I will definitely bring him out and chop him into thousands of pieces." Pausing for a bit before nervously asking, "Has there been any recent news about Rong Tian?"

"None."

"After Rong Tian's campsite was destroyed by the fire, there haven't been any news of him?"

"That's right." Uncle Zhang added, "However, we had complied with what Your Majesty commanded; we've sent spies to retrieve some news, I believe we will soon hear of Rong Tian's whereabouts."

Tong Er stood silent for a moment, suddenly in terror, he quivered, "Uncle Zhang, do you think that he sneaked into the capital already?"

"Your Majesty shouldn't jump to conclusions." Seeing Tong Er's frightened expression as if he witnessed his mother's death, Uncle Zhang watched him with eyes of affection, using the voice he once cradled him to sleep, he softly said, "Your Majesty is the biological son of Xi Lei Princess, you are of royal bloodline. Why do you have to be wary of Rong Tian? You are the same as Rong Tian, the same blood flowing inside you. Rong Tian did something against the Heaven's will. He refused to marry a Queen and conspired to create the Grace's Order in an attempt to shake the foundation of Xi Lei. Even the former Kings who had passed away would abandon him and choose you as their Great King."

Listening to his reasoning, Tong Er gradually quieted down.

His frightened expression slowly disappeared, he exhaled and whispered, "That's right, even the former Kings would not blame me..." Just like a child being forgiven for his wrongdoings, he expressed a sense of relief.

In a blink of an eye, he returned to his former Young Master Tong's domineering ways.

Outside, the cries of the maids have gradually died down, a short moment later, the guards in charge of the torture came running in to report, "Your Majesty, those maids who trespassed within your chambers could no longer bear the beating and are now dead."

"Drag them out and bury the dead, what's there to report?" Without taking much notice, Tong Er casually spoke, his lips not even revealing a trace of smile, "Tell them to send another group of maids over here. Wait, also send for some young boys, the few well-behaved types tonight."

The cute face, innocent eyes, and tender body. Maybe they can help drive away those terrible nightmares.

"Send out my order, I will not be sleeping here tonight. Have the Crown Prince's Quarters swept clean, I want to sleep there. What are you still standing there foolishly for? Hurry up and get going!"

"Yes! We'll carry it out right away!"

Tong Er looked at the jittery attendants as he ordered them to work, his lips curved upward into a grin.

The Crown Prince's Quarters, he wants to head over there tonight, using those innocent docile bodies to vent his anger that he can't release anywhere else.

That year, when Rong Tian ravished An He by force, no, Feng Ming, that damn Duke Ming; holding Feng Ming's naked body, thrusting back and forth in that forbidden area, it was inside the Crown Prince's quarters.

Feng Ming, you should have just become that bug I killed years ago.

If I ever capture you alive, I will certainly take you over to the Crown Prince's quarters.

Turning you from a shining precious young man into the world's most wretched damaged goods, tortured ruthlessly, until you cry out begging for mercy, dying a tragic death!

An annoying bug like that, how can it be loved and appreciated by everyone?

How hateful!

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Yong Yin.

Feng Ming's journey has finally started!

Although there is Lou Deng and the other skilled swordsmen of Master Xiao, anything regarding Feng Ming's life, no one dares to make any mistake. Among the departure group, excluding the three palace maids, the rest were selected from the troops within Yue Zhong to come along. They were the most skillful among the elite troops under Rong Hu's command, a total of a hundred men will follow Feng Ming along the road.

Lie Zhong Liu placed Rong Hu in charge of the map; therefore, they successfully found a shortcut through the forest and on the fourth day, they reached the Aman shore as scheduled.

One magnificent large ship was already docked at the small port, Luo Deng and his men were waiting for Feng Ming's arrival.

"The ship has been thoroughly cleaned, the rooms have been newly decorated. Young Lord, please inspect."

Feng Ming proudly boarded the ship, everything was rearranged and decorated very luxuriously. He felt it was a shame to have such precious things on the deck of the boat, but Luo Deng said that according to the letter he received, Feng Ming wanted many things displayed excessively. Feng Ming knew that the one who could have possibly written the letter was Rong Tian.

Luo Deng explained that if its not displayed this way, then how can they show how wealthy the Xiao family is? Also, he felt that the weather was nice and Feng Ming could enjoy the view and sip hot tea at the same time. But if the weather is bad and it starts raining, then they could always pack up the items and bring them inside. He asked Feng Ming if he wanted to pack up the things instead?

FM: No need, since it's already like this, just let it be. You have arranged it very well, it's my fault for saying otherwise.

Luo Deng did not expect the Young Lord to give a compliment so he was slightly surprised. This Young Lord was kind and his attitude was completely different from the elder Master.

He had worked for the Xiao family for many years, with the same look on his face, he bowed down and said, "It's my duty."

"But...how come there is only one ship?"

LD: The letter states that the focus of the people should not be on Yue Zhong and Young Lord's location of boarding the ship should not be known to others. Since this is the Xiao Family's ship, people's attention will be hard to avoid, therefore, I ordered the other ships to separate themselves along the Aman River so no one will know the exact time Young Lord boards the ship.

Luo Deng later mentioned that according to their arrangement, there will be at least two ships that will arrive here before the evening to meet up.

After asking what time the men will arrive, Rong Hu found out that there is another hour where they won't have the backup if an enemy ambush happens. So for the time being, he had split out the one hundred guards he brought along. Thirty of them will be guarding within the forest, thirty will be at the pier, thirty will be surveying around the ship, while the remaining ten will be following beside Feng Ming.

When Feng Ming heard that ten men will stand guard next to him, it was no difference than being locked in a cage. But as the Big Boss, he must consider the greater good for everyone, so he didn't object. As for Luo Deng, he told Rong Hu that it's very safe on the ship and Rong Hu's men only needs to guard the vicinity outside the ship. As for the Young Lord's safety, his men can protect him.

Rong Hu figured that if the enemies knew that Duke Ming is aboard the ship then their focus will be on the ship; therefore, he rather have Rong Tian's elite soldiers who can battle against one hundred stay on the ship.

"The Xiao Family also has no less of skillful swordsmen."

RH: I understand that the men within the Xiao family are all skillful swordsmen, but Duke Ming needs to have our elite men besides him. I've received His Majesty's order to protect Duke Ming, so I can't allow Duke Ming to leave our sight.

LD: The Young Lord's safety, our Xiao family are naturally in charge. During this trip, the protection of the Young Lord's safety is also our duty. General Rong, if you and your men can aid on the outside, then Luo Deng will be very grateful.

Feng Ming opened his mouth in amazement as he looked at Rong Hu and Luo Deng.

How wonderful, the enemies have not yet to appeared, but a quarrel seems to be brewing up?

Feng Ming tried to interrupt them, but Rong Hu told him, "Anything Duke Ming says is useless." Staring directly at Luo Deng, he said, "This trip was originally planned for me and the one hundred elite guards to protect Duke Ming closely, while the Xiao Family's men are to act as secondary protection."

Feng Ming fell silent.

With his stubborn attitude, it seems that there's a little chance to convince Rong Hu.

Luo Deng slightly smiled, his attitude was very respectful and seemed to be the one to give in.

FM: Luo Deng, Rong Hu is following Rong Tian's order to stay by my side. He has to carry out his duties so there is no other way. That's why the one in charge of protecting me is him. Haha, all of you are here to protect me, so it doesn't matter who is protecting on the outside or not.

Luo Deng stooped down and with a wry smile, he said, "It's not because this subordinate wants to argue with Young Lord's orders, but...there is no other option. This was the Master's orders."

Feng Ming was surprised.

The Master? It can't be the heartless father of his, could it? The world's famous middle-aged handsome Holy Master Xiao?

"My father?"

"Yes, the Master sent a message, please take a look, Young Lord." After finishing, Luo Deng pulled out a letter from within his sleeves.

Feng Ming received it and opened up the letter. It was indeed a command letter, even more simple than the letter Lady Yao Ye wrote to force Master Xiao to marry her, this one only had a few words....

Monitor him closely.

Though Feng Ming couldn't verify the handwriting of Master Xiao, but since Luo Deng said it was written by him, then he can't be wrong. Luo Deng tells Feng Ming that because of Master Xiao's orders, his men cannot disregard it, therefore they also need to closely guard Feng Ming.

Rong Hu didn't back down and also said that he cannot ignore Rong Tian's orders.

Luo Deng replied that he is not the one in charge of monitoring Feng Ming, but the one responsible will be Luo Ning, the leader of the elite group, who will be arriving here shortly. If Rong Hu can prove his ability in martial arts then maybe Luo Ning will hand over the main task of protecting Feng Ming to him.

Hearing this, Feng Ming was shocked. He didn't want Rong Hu to battle with Luo Ning and get hurt (like he did back when they were at the campsite) so in order to appease everyone, Feng

Ming agreed to have protection from both sides with a total of twenty closely guarded men, ten from Rong Hu's men and ten from the Xiao family men.

Rong Hu brought out the ten young men and introduced them to Feng Ming. He also tells Feng Ming that he was worried Feng Ming wouldn't agree to have them around, but since Feng Ming agreed, then he shouldn't change his mind halfway through the trip.

Feng Ming asked Rong Hu who taught him (to be stubborn), Rong Hu replied that it was the Prime Minister.

Feng Ming then turned to Luo Deng and asked him, "Are you also banding together with them to tease me?"

LD: I wouldn't dare. This was what Xi Lei's Prime Minister wanted to give Duke Ming as a gift. I was just following along.

FM: Gift?

LD: For the first day on Duke Ming's trip, we have to test his calmness during intense situations and taste the consequence of his own swift decision making. Having your own people trick you is better than having the enemy trick you. Please remember this lesson well, Duke Ming.

Feng Ming helplessly said, "Then that letter was fake?"

LD: The letter is fake, but the Elder Master did send a verbal message. He hopes that Young Lord still remember his words.

Xiao Zong did said that within one year, Feng Ming had to find a safe water route of transportation; otherwise, he will be killed without mercy.

Thinking about this, Feng Ming had another headache.

At that moment, a burst of chatter was heard from the opposite side, Chiu Lan and the other maids came from the cabin and reached the bottom of the ladder to the deck.

Feng Ming asked them if they saw something exciting, in which they replied that there were a bunch of colorful brocade that they really like. Luo Deng told them that those brocades are for the Young Lord and all of the maids to use and create clothes, so if they like a certain color, they are free to use it to tailor.

Chiu Yue was overjoyed knowing that she can use good material to make herself some new clothes.

Chiu Lan said that she'll make some cloaks for Feng Ming first and then she'll make two sets with bright colors for Lie Er. Feng Ming teased her by asking her why she won't make two sets for Rong Hu instead. He then asked about Chiu Xing.

CX: I can't compared with Chiu Yue and Chiu Lan in clothe making, but there's no need to worry. Once Chiu Yue is done making hers, I can always take it and wear it.

CY: Chiu Xing, you're despicable!

The whole crowd laughed.

Having these girls here helped to ease the atmosphere and Feng Ming's mood was better.

The maids helped spread a blanket on the deck for Feng Ming to rest and enjoy the the scenery from above. Feng Ming called to Rong Hu to join him, but Rong Hu just smiled and waved to the ten guards to form a semi-circle line of defense in front of the bow of ship. Not wanting to leave his position, he met Feng Ming's glance and told him that this was to guard against arrows shooting the front of the ship from the forest.

While they were getting settled, Chiu Xing realized that something was missing, which Chiu Lan realized they were missing tea and snacks. Just when she was about to stand up and prepare them, Luo Deng brought over several maids and told them that tea and snacks are all here. From the last encounter, he had observed that Feng Ming preferred sweet food and so he prepared five sweet and three salty snacks, along with a comfy back cushion for his comfort.

After the hot tea and snacks were served, Rong Hu noticed that someone is coming towards them. Luo Deng tells him that it must be Luo Ning and the others.

Luo Ning arrived and went to see Feng Ming, who was enjoying the scenery at the top deck.

LD: Young Lord, this is Luo Ning, the one in charge of the Xiao Family's elite men. He will be the one to coordinate the escort.

Feng Ming examined Luo Ning, who was tall and handsome, a man without a doubt. With one glance, he was around 35 to 36 years old. His eyebrows were dark, straight, and long to the edge.

His intense aura left a chill on everyone who approached him.

The Xiao Family's elite men were in fact, the Xiao Family's league of assassins. The Xiao Family's wealth came from the shipping business but no one would dare to provoke the strength of these men. In order to lead a group of assassins in this world, he, of course, cannot avoid emitting a deadly aura.

“Luo Ning has seen Young Lord before.”

Feng Ming nodded his head. He looked at Luo Ning and Luo Ning also looked back at him. His sharp eagle eyes swept back and forth on Feng Ming’s body, he suddenly said, “Young Lord seems to have a more godly aura than before.” Although what he said wasn’t rude, it was also not respectful.

Feng Ming was surprised and asked, “You have seen me before?”

Luo Ning had such a deadly aura to him that if one were to see him, then he would not have forgotten.

Luo Ning seemed to but not seemed to smile as he replied, “People in our line of work usually try our best to personally meet all the dignitaries in the world, in order to facilitate the order given by our Master. It’s just that one time when secretly spying on the Young Lord, I didn’t know that you were the well known Duke Ming.”

After he said that, the people around him came to a realization. This person must often sneak into the other nations to spy on different dignitaries to gather information. So in the future if someone needs to be assassinated, the chances of a mistake will be greatly reduced.

Thus, the Xiao Family’s elite men are in fact a league of assassins, and professional ones.

Feng Ming couldn’t have imagined that he was once a target to be studied. Thinking back about what Rong Tian said, if Xiao Zong really wanted to kill someone, even Rong Tian, the Xi Lei King, wouldn’t be able to protect him. This thought gave him a chill.

If he cannot open up a safe water route to transport the luminescent sand within the given time, then perhaps the person sent to assassinate him would be the person in front of him, Luo Ning.

LN: If Young Lord is a slightly taller than before then that would be good. Yes, very good.

His pupils emitted a bright light as he stared at Feng Ming from top to bottom.

Feeling confused, Feng Ming wondered what was very good.

Luo Ning suddenly raised his voice and called out, “Luo Yun, come over here.”

“Yes!”

Following the loud voice that answered, within the group of Luo Ning’s men stood out one person. After walking out of the crowd, he asked, “Dad, what is it?”

Only when he was standing in front of the others did Feng Ming see him clearly. The young man was around 17 to 18 years old, but looked older for his age. His height was not much of a difference from Feng Ming's, his figure was pleasing to the eyes, he had a straight nose, his eyebrows were 50% similar to Luo Ning's, his face was slightly more friendly than Luo Ning's, but was still colder than the average person. His eyes were clear and held a feel of calmness.

Luo Ning told him to stand beside Feng Ming and seemed to measure their height ratio. He nodded and said, "Ah, Young Lord, this is my son, Luo Yun. This time around, he will act as your substitute."

"My substitute?"

Feng Ming's eyes widened, he turned around and looked curiously at Luo Yun.

He heard of substitute before, but it is usually in tv shows or wuxia novels. He didn't expect to really meet one and yet that person is his substitute.

LN: Yes, I was worried that Luo Yun would be taller than Young Lord. But that main problem now no longer exists. Starting today, Luo Yun will stay beside Young Lord and will study Young Lord's every demeanor. As for appearance, I'll handle it. Once we enter Tong Kingdom, you will have to disguise yourself as the Young Lord, without any flaws.

Luo Yun seemed to have accepted many similar tasks before so he accepted without hesitation.

Feng Ming asked Luo Ning that even though their heights are not much of a difference, Luo Yun and his temperament along with appearance are completely different, so how can all of those be disguised without any flaws?

Luo Ning didn't like to talk much and didn't seem to pay Feng Ming much respect. He only said, "Wait until we arrive in Tong Kingdom, Young Lord will immediately understand."

Rong Hu asked, "Why do we have to wait until reaching Tong Kingdom?"

"Because right now, Tong Kingdom is very dangerous for the Young Lord. Once the Young Lord reaches Tong Kingdom, having a substitute will be useful at that time."

Luo Ning's appearance was already filled with a deadly aura, Feng Ming doesn't know whether he was born with it, but his tone of voice towards the Young Lord was very indifferent. The more calmly he spoke, the more a person felt uneasy.

Feng Ming almost subconsciously felt goosebumps throughout his body as he suspiciously guessed, "The relationship between Tong Kingdom and Xi Lei has never been good, I also know

that, but I don't have any deep hatred with them. And this time, I'll be using the Xiao's family Young Lord's name to inspect the shipping business so there shouldn't be any big trouble, right?" He looked at everyone with his wide eyes, hoping to receive a nod in agreement from them.

It wasn't because he was confident, but Lie Zhong Liu and Rong Tian had reminded him beforehand.

"Originally, there is no big trouble." Luo Ning calmly answered, "However, while I was on the road, I heard the latest news in Tong Kingdom about a rumor that Rong Tian and the Young Lord had conspired to kill the King of Tong, Qing Ding. The Tong Prince, Qing Li has a huge grudge against Young Lord. Knowing that Young Lord is heading to every nation and will be stopping by Tong Kingdom, he has made a vow to chop Young Lord into thousand pieces."

"What?" Feng Ming's face suddenly paled.

Sure enough, no one can predict what the heavens have planned.

No matter how amazing Rong Tian and Lie Zhong Liu are, they cannot calculate everything thoroughly, yet they said that no nation would dare to openly confess their intention of eliminating him, they would just send assassins instead.

Lie Zhong Liu did confess to him before that if a powerful army were to be mobilized and sent to kill him, then even Rong Hu and Master Xiao's men may not be able to protect him.

Chopped into thousand pieces....seems to be quite serious.

Qing Ding was obviously killed by Bo Ling and the Third Princess of Fan Jia, while he is completely innocent.

But in front of Tong Kingdom's Prince, just relying on the relationship between Rong Tian and Qing Ding and also the relationship of Rong Tian and Feng Ming, what other words can Feng Ming say to clearly explain everything?

Chiu Yue opened up and said that Rong Tian had mentioned that if there is any danger then Duke Ming should avoid it. Since that's the case, then they should avoid heading to Tong Kingdom.

Feng Ming started thinking about this problem when Luo Deng tells him that the news of him traveling around the world had spread across the land. Hearing this, Feng Ming sighed at the highly efficiency of the Xiao Family's worldwide notification. If he were to cancel the trip to Tong Kingdom, then it would be humiliating and Tong Kingdom would confirm that he was guilty for being afraid of going there.

However, if he really stopped by there, then just when he steps foot in Tong Kingdom, he will already get captured by Tong Prince. Swish! One stab and he will be killed, wouldn't his death be unjust?

He still wants to go on a sightseeing tour with Rong Tian after unifying the world.

What a headache!

Whose bright idea was it to give a public announcement and then follow through? This is just great, letting the whole world know so that now it's not even possible to sneak into any place.

What a real dilemma.

Luo Deng asked if Feng Ming was still thinking about whether to stop by Tong Kingdom or not. Feng Ming stated that he needed to think about this carefully, but Luo Deng told him there is nothing much to consider since the Elder Master has a message to pass to him.

"Ah? Another message? What message?"

"The Elder Master said, 'Well done, very courageous. He is finally showing a bit of Xiao Zong's valor.'"

Although his mood was very vexed, but to hear his father's first verbal praise, Feng Ming's mood was relieved a lot, he slightly smiled, "He really sent someone to pass this message? Hehe, I..."

"This is just the first half of it, there is also the other half."

"The other half of it?"

LD: Yes. If he dares to give up halfway, causing me to lose face, then just break his arms and legs and tell him to never come out and disgrace the Xiao Family again.

Feng Ming's smile abruptly solidified on his face, both funny and pathetic at the same time.

"Young Lord?"

After a long pause, Feng Ming withdrew his smile, "I understand, you are teasing me, right?"

Luo Deng looked at him sympathetically.

"Haha, how is that possible? I am his only son, right? If I don't follow through with the original plan, he can't possibly send someone to make me disabled, right?"

That can't be!

That's right, although he did use the Xiao family name to spread the news, which proved he wasn't scared and didn't back down from hardship. Overall he is not talented in swordsmanship as Xiao Zong would like, but that doesn't mean that he would break his only precious son's arms and legs, would he?

Only a messed up person would do something like this!

Feng Ming stared at Luo Deng, "This must be fake."

"It's completely true." Luo Deng still looked at him sympathetically, "The person to do so will be Luo Ning."

Luo Ning?!

His father, Xiao Zong, is really a messed up person!

Catching Feng Ming's glance at him, Luo Ning nodded and said, "It's true, Luo Ning also received this message. No matter how dangerous the trip is, because of the Xiao family's name, Young Lord must not retreat out of fear. The Xiao Family's reputation has lasted for a 100 years, if Young Lord wants to make changes to the trip, Luo Ning will have to follow the Elder Master's intention and disable Young Lord's limbs. Not only that, Elder Master will repossess his property and wealth in order to preserve the Xiao family name. I would like to ask Young Lord, will we follow the original plan and enter Tong Kingdom?"

His hand gently pressed onto the hilt of the sword hanging at his waist, once Feng Ming shakes his head, he will immediately take action.

Rong Hu couldn't stand the attitude Luo Ning was having towards Feng Ming, he coldly said, "You already know that the Prince of Tong Kingdom wants to kill Duke Ming, this matter would endanger Duke Ming's life, we cannot continue forth. If you want to harm Duke Ming, you'll have to ask my sword first." His hands also pressed against the hilt of his sword as he stepped forward.

Luo Ning, who was in charge of the Xiao family's league of assassins, had traveled the world for more than ten years. Other than Xiao Zong, he never held any respect for anyone else. Even Rong Tian didn't hold any importance to him so don't even mention Rong Hu. He snorted coldly, "Alright!"

Seeing Rong Hu and Luo Ning along with their group of men challenging each other, Feng Ming's face went pale white. Both sides were his own people, being expert swordsmen among

swordsmen, once they begin the fight, swords will be flying everywhere and injuring someone wouldn't be good.

This is terrible...

His little heart was pounding, Feng Ming was dripping in sweat, he quickly asked, "All of you, there's no need to be anxious, let's talk this over!" Silently thinking, if this was another one of the Prime Minister's trick then it would be good, but judging by everyone's demeanor, it seems to be real.

Feeling anxious, Feng Ming looked around and his gaze unexpectedly fell upon Luo Yun, who was standing next to him with a smile full of disdain, he suddenly realized something.

Why did Lie Zhong Liu give him such a strange "gift?" Could it be because he guessed that the Xiao Family bodyguards and Rong Hu's bodyguards would be in conflict, therefore, he let him practice the act?

Without the practice act, he would certainly panic when witnessing this and disgrace himself by speaking nonsensically.

After thinking about the situation, Feng Ming told himself that he must continue upholding the Xiao Family's reputation because he can't lose the bargaining chip of owning a gigantic wealthy inheritance to help Rong Tian. Not only does he want Xiao Family's wealth but he also wants Xiao Family's talented people.

But... how can he get them?

Slightly calm, Feng Ming almost blurted out, "Don't fight, I'll just go to Tong Kingdom." But those words abruptly got stuck in his throat. Feng Ming thought to himself, he hasn't made a conclusive decision whether or not he will be going to Tong Kingdom, but being scared by Luo Ning, if he were to speak those words at once then they would think that he was someone who is afraid of death and easily persuaded. In the future, he won't be able to put up a glorious facade in front of Master Xiao's men.

Thinking of this, he stepped in front of Rong Hu and Luo Ning to intervene in their preparation to fight. Revealing a smile on his serious face, he told them, "Do you really want to fight? Come, I'll be the referee. You two don't have to mind the rules of jianghu, just continue to fight as you like. Having Master Xiao's men and Rong Tian's elite bodyguards fight each other will most definitely be an exciting sight."

(Note: The "jianghu" (江湖; lit. "rivers and lakes") refers to a community of martial artists)

After listening to him, they were all stunned.

FM: After the bloody fight, it's either you die and I live, with both sides heavily injured, it's best to have some bodyguards left or else an enemy ambush would take this opportunity to capture everyone. The ship has yet to sail and yet an internal conflict has started. Wouldn't this be humiliating to my father, Xiao Zong?

Ever since coming to this era, he had met Rong Tian, Ruo Yan, Lu Dan, and Lie Zhong Liu. All of them are powerful figures. Although his words were not as eloquent as them, he had spent some time with them so he could at least mimic around 40% of their demeanor and try to be similar to them. At this time, his smile quickly disappeared, his handsome face darkened as his dark pupils swept towards the crowd, giving them a frightening feeling.

Chiu Lan and the others have served him for some time, but they never saw a reserved and impressive Feng Ming before. They all clutched their chests with their small hands, without saying anything, they stared at him in awe.

Feng Ming brought out the mannerism of Duke Ming and Young Master Xiao, which quell the crowd, but he knew this was only temporarily. It was probably because his image has always been too soft and the change was too sudden, therefore they did not respond right away.

If they were to respond without holding back, then the situation would not be good. Especially Luo Ning, it would be hard to persuade him.

FM: This trip was originally planned to follow the Aman River in Yong Yin and head towards Tong Kingdom. After that, we would disembark and travel to Bo Jian, Bei Qi, then Dong Fan to rest. Afterwards, head to Pu Rong and Yan Ting. But now, since things have changed, we must improvise.

Without letting anyone have a chance to speak, Feng Ming's demeanor changed, he put on a calm facade as he said, "About Tong Kingdom's rumors, the Prime Minister may not have gotten the news. Rong Hu, send someone to quickly send this news to him and see if he has any suggestions."

Rong Hu called out in response, looking over at Luo Ning to make sure he took no further action. Rong Hu quietly motioned for his men to step back to their original position.

The sound of sword clashing and explosive tension were eased off quite a bit.

Turning to Luo Ning, Feng Ming imitated Rong Tian's inscrutable demeanor and lightly said, "If you are in charge of the Xiao family's men, then who is in charge of gathering information?"

Because Luo Ning was in charge of gathering information from other nations, he had once snuck into Xi Lei palace and saw the cowardly, incompetent and timid Crown Prince An He, the type of person Luo Ning despises the most. With a bad first impression, how can he show the same

respect to this person called Xi Lei Duke Ming, who also took on the name of Young Master Xiao, Feng Ming?

A nation can easily be changed, but a person's personality cannot, a person who is afraid of death will always be afraid of death. This useless coward, yet Xiao Zong acknowledged his identity and gave the whole Xiao Family's inheritance to him. Luo Ning is a loyal subordinate to the Xiao family, although he can't deny this fact (about Feng Ming), he felt it was not right.

LN: Reporting to Young Lord; the one in charge of Xiao family's spies and managing information is me.

"Ah." Feng Ming nodded his head as he gave his order, "Good, I won't need to use Rong Tian's men. I'll let you take care of gathering information from Tong Kingdom. I want to know what type of person the Prince of Tong is, his personality, preferences and his relationship with his dead father, whether it's good, fair or poor. Also, what are some of the powerful ministers in Tong Kingdom. If I were to enter Tong Kingdom, which person would want to see me dead and which one wishes for me to leave Tong Kingdom safely, hoping the Xiao family will not take revenge towards Tong Kingdom. Do you understand?"

"Yes." Luo Ning said, "I understand. I will immediately sent someone to inquire about the news within Tong Kingdom."

When he finished, he slightly bowed down, removing his hands off the hilt of the sword.

Feng Ming let out a silent breath of relief after seeing that.

He was worried that he might be too arrogant, taking the role of Young Lord too far and angering the world famous ruthless boss of Master Xiao's league of assassins, who might have stabbed him in the chest with his sword.

In Feng Ming's eyes, nine out of ten of the Xiao family's men are inhumane. Remembering that day when his father told him to watch his swordplay, it wasn't because he was feeling uneasy inside and asked to accompany him. That time, he could have easily taken Rong Hu's life.

Luo Ning no longer held onto his sword, the men behind him seemed to follow a silent command and like ghosts, they slowly retreated behind the dark shadow inside the cabin.

The situation was further stabilized.

Feng Ming recited a phrase inside his mind, "Thank you Virgin Mary." He turned around to find Luo Deng, revealing a calm smile, he softly said, "Once the other ship arrives and joins up with us, we'll immediately set sail. The pace of the travel will be in your control, but we'll need to receive information about Tong Kingdom before our fleet can enter Tong Kingdom's borders."

Luo Deng quickly obeyed.

After assigning three tasks, Feng Ming's eyes fell upon Chiu Lan, Chiu Yue and Chiu Xing, who were standing to the side. Slightly scared, they didn't dare to make a sound.

A smile appeared on Feng Ming's face as he pleasantly said, "That's right, I can't just let the three of you be idle while everyone else is busy. From today onward, pick some brocade fabric and create several sets of clothes for the special occasion. Do not spare any material, the more ornate the better."

His calm attitude greatly eased the atmosphere.

Chiu Lan gradually recovered herself, gracefully bowed and replied, "Yes, your servant understands."

This respectful manner was usually reserved for Rong Tian, yet this was the first time she had given Feng Ming formality and obediently stood up.

Luo Ning, who was secretly observing Feng Ming from the sideline, this Young Lord in front of him, whose appearance and stature had matured from before, was he really the same An He he had seen that year in the palace? After hearing about the Prince of Tong wanting to take revenge for his father, his hands and feet were wavering back and forth, just as Luo Ning had expected.

However, Luo Ning could not imagine that during the tense confrontation between the two sides, this Young Lord would change into a different person, even daring to speak out.

He even methodically divided tasks. His indifferent calm tone, along with his extraordinary handsome appearance were different from the former An He.

"Young Lord." Luo Ning pondered for a while before continuing, "Young Lord still has not completely answered about the problem earlier."

"What problem?"

"About traveling to Tong Kingdom, are you continuing or not?"

The reason Luo Ning asked was to understand whether or not Feng Ming was trying to ease the problem earlier.

If he changes the trip plan, then Luo Ning would immediately take action according to Xiao Zong's instruction. This, he cannot blame Luo Ning for doing as he was told.

If Feng Ming chooses to not change the trip plan, then Feng Ming would seem helpless under pressure, fearing that Luo Ning would disable his limbs.

It's obvious that the treatment of the ruthless expert of the Xiao family towards this Young Master of unknown origin showed that he was not very satisfied with Feng Ming.

Fortunately for Feng Ming, he was well-prepared as he replied, "You just need to gather the information about Tong Kingdom as soon as possible and report back to me. The decision of whether to change the original trip plan or not will be determined by me. After receiving the news about Tong Kingdom, I will make my decision of whether our ships will advance to Tong Kingdom or not."

FM: This time, the purpose of this trip is unifying the world and not to send oneself on a death row. If I were to follow one word from my father or a threat from you, Luo Ning, then I would make a hasty decision without carefully analyzing the situation. Whether to move forward or head backward, without understanding every consequence and arranging myself along with my people into the hands of danger, then, what kind of qualifications would I have as your Young Lord?

Everyone went silent.

Whether it was Luo Ning or Rong Hu, Feng Ming's answer was beyond their expectation. He was wise for his young age, an aura completely different than the norm. Even the unconcerned, unemotional Luo Yun showed a trace of deep thought.

"This matter will be handled this way." With a confident attitude, Feng Ming did not bother himself with the rest. He left the men standing and swaggered back to his deluxe, luxurious and spacious master suite.

Once inside the suite, Rong Hu and the ten selected Xiao Family's bodyguards, making a total of twenty men, were standing guard outside. Feng Ming led Chiu Lan in, and the other maids went inside the room. After closing the door, all of them let out a sudden sigh.

CL: That Luo Ning is really scary. A while ago, he seemed like he really wanted to disable Feng Ming's limbs with his sword. Luckily, our Duke Ming is more impressive than him; with a few words, Duke Ming ordered him to carry out his duties.

CY/CX: Duke Ming is really amazing! Even though those Xiao Family's men are so intimidating.

"Isn't that right? Really amazing!"

"Of course!"

FM: At first it was really strange. My father didn't really like me, so why would he suddenly hand over his business and fortune to me? Ah, it seems that taking over the Xiao family's fortune is really miserable.

Feng Ming rubbed his chest to feel his poor heart.

Still beating heavily, he frowned, "I'm still drenched in cold sweat."

"Let us see." Chiu Lan walked over and touched the back of his neck, her face went pale, "It is, you're covered in cold sweat. Duke Ming, quickly change your clothes or else you might catch a cold."

Chiu Yue and Chiu Xing hurried over, just when they were about to help Feng Ming change, a knock was heard.

"Who is it?"

"Replying to Young Lord, it's me, Luo Deng."

Chiu Yue opened the door, behind Luo Deng was Rong Hu and Luo Yun. Luo Ning was nowhere to be seen.

Luo Deng reported, "Young Lord, the remaining ship has arrived. According to Young Lord's command, your subordinate wanted them to head towards Tong Kingdom in a slow pace. The spring season is filled with lots of rain, adequate for sailing, it will not be difficult to navigate the ship. In accordance to the sailing speed, we will reach the border of Tong Kingdom within 13 days. By that time, Luo Ning's inquiry report of Tong Kingdom will arrive."

By the time they entered his room, Feng Ming was planning on revealing his pitiful face to Chiu Lan, but now he calmly nodded, putting up a front like he got everything under control.

Luo Deng continued, "Luo Yun will become Young Lord's substitute when necessary in the future. Therefore, from today onward, he will follow right beside Young Lord, memorizing your every movement and demeanor."

"Oh?"

"Luo Yun is still young, if there is anything unsatisfactory that I do in the future, I hope that Young Lord will forgive me."

Luo Yun stepped forward, clasped his hand towards Feng Ming and spoke sonorously.

The candle light in the room was brighter than the moonlight on deck that he could see Luo Yun's appearance more clearly.

Feng Ming took a closer look, and sure enough Luo Yun's image was somewhat similar to him. If one were to view him from behind, his stature was around 80-90% similar, no wonder Luo Ning selected him as his substitute.

However, Luo Yun's expression is too rigid, something that was very different from Feng Ming.

He wondered how such a young person would display such a bone-chilling old man's face. Suddenly a burst of loud percussion music, earth shaking sound rang out.

Up and down the river, the sound of drums, bells, gongs and other instruments were heard in the surrounding.

Feng Ming and the rest were startled, it vaguely felt that the music was coming from the vicinity of the ship and around the ship, they couldn't help but look strangely at Luo Deng.

Luo Deng smiled and said, "The ship is traveling on the river, with music lingering, it will display its power and prestige. Young Lord's letter had mentioned of it, saying that the more noise the better so the whole world can hear it."

Feng Ming, Chiu Lan and the others looked at each other.

The letter that was sent from Yue Zhong to Luo Deng, using Feng Ming's name, who is the culprit that wrote it?

Was it Rong Tian? Or was it Lie Zhong Liu?

Maybe it was the two of them who joined up to cause this mischief!

CHAPTER 3

The time Feng Ming started his journey was also the same time that the copies of the Grace Order were spread across the land, from the various small towns to Kingdom Li, thousands of miles away.

Ruo Yan was sitting alone with a pile of records in front of him, all of which were brought up by his ministers. He concentrated hard as he read them, hoping to explore the deep meaning behind the written words concealed within the sheets of paper on the table.

This is Rong Tian's "gift."

The grand "gift" Rong Tian gave to every noble and aristocrats in every big and small cities, even mysteriously appearing in the capital of Li Kingdom.

This notice was posted on the walls within the city, and if an inn owner were to carelessly forget and leave it behind on a table, it would be picked up by the peasants or slaves. If one of them is literate then he would read it for everyone to hear, spreading the news throughout, attracting followers and corrupting their hearts.

Zhuo Ran, who guarded Li Tong (the capital), carried out Ruo Yan's command to stop the incoming notice of the Grace Order.

Those who read, relate, or gather to discuss about it will be sentenced to a harsh punishment. If they are somewhat clever then they better stay quiet.

"The Grace Order..." Ruo Yan stared at the papers on the table, his mouth faintly muttering those three words, and in an almost inaudible tone, he snorted coldly.

The candlelight inside the room is quite visible outside the main door. Outside the windows, the moonlight sharply shined against the purple silk curtains, contrasting Ruo Yan's face in an angular slice, leaving a clear imprint of his sharp features.

Pacing footsteps were heard coming from outside.

"Who's there?"

"Miao Guang came as ordered from Li Tong to greet Royal Brother."

"Oh, it's Royal Sister!" Ruo Yan redirected his focus, placed the Grace Order to the side of the table and faced the door.

"Come in, this place is far from Li Tong, I didn't expect you to arrive here so soon. Even though I requested for your audience, you didn't have to come greet me in the middle of the night like this."

"The earlier I can meet Royal Brother, the sooner my mind will be at ease. When Royal Brother regained his consciousness, you immediately sneaked into Yong Yin to ambush Rong Tian; and after that, you didn't even bother to return to Li Tong. Instead, you headed straight to Fan Jia, making me very worried nonetheless!" Miao Guang stepped through the door. The maids helped her remove her cloak and soon left. She then walked next to Ruo Yan. With her eyes glancing

down, she gave a light chuckle, "It seems that this has reached Royal Brother's hands, I even purposely brought a copy to show you."

Ruo Yan patted at the empty space next to him, asking her to sit down, "Rong Tian's Grace Order, what do you think about it?"

"Rong Tian is conniving, using treacherous means; this one move of his is beyond other's expectations, not bad indeed."

"Ah..."

After listening to his sister's open sentence of praising first and then mocking afterwards, he knew there were more, so he continued, "However...?"

Miao Guang smiled as she removed her deerskin boots. Still wearing the white stockings with no trace of dirt, she climbed onto Ruo Yan's mattress and playfully rested herself against Ruo Yan's shoulders. Her face revealed a sly hint of innocence, "However, no matter how many times he anticipates, he still couldn't have imagined that Royal Brother was blessed by the Heavens, regaining consciousness so soon. Therefore, this one good move of his, is a very wrong one."

Ruo Yan grinned; his large hand softly patted his little sister's cheek, revealing a rare gentle side of him.

"If there's enough time, The Grace Order could be the biggest weapon Rong Tian has created. There are countless commoners across the land filled with delusions they dare not speak of. For those inferior peasants, this absurd decree, if they have no doubt about it, would be their salvation. It's enough to make them capable of rebellion, forming allegiance with Rong Tian. However..." Ruo Yan changed his tone of voice as he sneered, "Even his own throne, he can't even hold onto. Right now, he's like a wanderer without a stable foothold and yet he wants to issue a decree and is promoting it openly. If he wants the whole world to believe him, then he still needs a very long time to convince them."

"Royal Brother won't definitely allow Rong Tian to have enough time to brew his plan."

With a flash in his eyes, he suddenly swung his hand across the table, knocking down the Grace Order's notice into the ground. Tilting his head towards the sky, he laughed heartily, "To deal with this one move by Rong Tian, the best method would be for a quick attack. Once I annex Fan Jia, the fertile land along the Aman River will be mine. Then, when Li Kingdom's army occupies the area, there will be two large nations supplying food. Those smaller nations, who would dare to look at my face and attack me?"

With his dark black sword-like eyebrows, he emitted a domineering aura that no one would dare to look down upon.

Miao Guang lifted her head and stared at her prideful brother, after pondering for awhile, a slight sigh escaped her lips.

Ruo Yan shifted his gaze and asked, "Royal Sister, why are you sighing?"

"It's nothing..." Miao Guang wasn't clear as to why she was sighing, being taken aback, she was quiet for a bit before replying in a whisper, "Royal Brother's schemes are excellent, but during the 100 years of disputes among the 13 nations, there was never a situation where a large nation was annexed. Once Fan Jia has officially perished, the other nations might greatly fear us, I'm just afraid that they will unite to go against you."

"You don't need to worry about this." Ruoyan calmly reassured, "Rong Tian's throne was seized and right now he's having a headache, thinking about how to regain his throne. I have already sent someone to contact Rong Tong and provide all sorts of schemes to deal with Rong Tian. Regardless of who would win in the future, Xi Lei's strength will decrease after battling each other, and that inner conflict will leave the nation in destruction. Xi Lei will no longer be able to resist like before. Rong Tian will no longer be a threat, and those smaller nations will be nothing. The King of Tong Kingdom has recently passed away, causing chaos throughout that land. Dong Fan's troops were narrowed down by the smallpox; it's not worth mentioning. Bo Jian, Bei Qi, Yan Ting, Pu Rong, all of those rulers are a bunch of idiots, they only know how to tear each other apart. As long as they don't join their forces and resist, I have a way of capturing each one of them step by step." Using a regaling tone like before, Ruoyan reached out and held Miao Guang's chin, after examining her eyes, he continued, "But these are not the reason for your sighing."

"Royal Brother..."

"Just tell me everything honestly!"

Miao Guang was shocked, she lowered her head and sadly replied, "When you mentioned about the Grace Order, I just felt that this isn't something a person like Rong Tian, who was born to inherit the throne, would come up with. This matter made me think of someone else..."

Ruoyan laughed, "Is that person Duke Ming?"

His tone was very relaxed, causing Miao Guang's whole body to tremble, she nodded her head...

Ruoyan sighed, "Royal Sister, you don't need to feel guilty about the releasing of Duke Ming at the Aman River incident." The long fingers that made many people fear were now gently stroking his little sister's head, following her long hair, he rested his hand on her shoulders and softly whispered, "Instead, after I regained consciousness and recalled that incident, I felt that what you did was right. If at that time, you didn't let Duke Ming escape, my rage at seeing him would definitely take control; killing him without mercy in the process."

Miao Guang suddenly looked up, catching his gaze, she quivered while saying, "But...Royal Brother wouldn't have been in a mad disarray if I didn't help Duke Ming escape, allowing Rong Tian to take advantage and shoot an arrow at you, resulting in a long coma."

"Victory and defeat is a normal issue, ah...this is what Duke Ming had lectured regarding on being a man, receiving an arrow from the enemy, what does it matter? Rong Tian was also shot by one of my arrows in which he almost died, but unfortunately, he was rescued by Mei Ji."

Miao Guang didn't hear a trace of resentment in his voice, his mood was calm and warm when she looked at his eyes, slightly closed.

The two siblings nestled on the soft mattress, resting against each other, and not saying another word for a long while.

After some time, Miao Guang's voice rang out, "I came here to share another news with Royal Brother. There has been a recent rumor of Duke Ming being acknowledged as Master Xiao's successor to inherit the Xiao family's business. He is currently touring through various nations to oversee the Xiao family's business."

After Ruo Yan heard about Long Tian's death, he rushed non-stop to the small city residing between the borders of Li Kingdom and Fan Jia, joining up with the large army. He immediately planned out his move of swallowing the entire Fan Jia and was increasingly busy. This was the first news he heard about Feng Ming. After a moment of silence, he suddenly grinned, "He sure is more daring than before, is Rong Tian with him? How many troops are on hand?"

Miao Guang shook her head, "I haven't heard any news about Rong Tian. I'm guessing that he wanted to regain the throne, but doesn't want Feng Ming to be involved in the dispute; therefore, he is conspiring alone at the border of Xi Lei. While on the other hand, allowing Feng Ming to use his Young Master Xiao identity to travel to the different nations to take refuge. Duke Ming's identity is a bit sensitive now, having both Holy Master Xiao and Rong Tian as his support. I believe all those small nations will treat him with complete respect."

"He allowed Duke Ming to take refuge in the other nations? If he really wanted to avoid misfortune, the safest place would be next to Rong Tian." Ruo Yan pondered for long moment, his eyes emitted a light that could frighten others, "Something is very strange for Rong Tian to allow him to risk danger and travel to different nations. Immediately send someone to investigate every news regarding Duke Ming."

Miao Guang accepted the order and after wondering for a bit, she tentatively asked, "If Royal Brother has Duke Ming in his hands again, what are you going to do with him?"

Ruo Yan laughed at the question, "Are you afraid I might kill him? Rest assured, once he falls into my hands, he won't even think about committing suicide. How can I allow him to do so?"

Miao Guang was Ruo Yan's closest relative, this brother of hers, she quite understands him very well. After listening carefully to his tone of voice when mentioning Feng Ming, his often unpredictable love and hate were truthfully expressed at this moment. If he were to have Feng Ming in hand, he will definitely not harm him. With that in mind, she was at ease. Stepping off from the mattress, she kneeled in front of Ruo Yan, "This rare opportunity, Miao Guang wishes to have Royal Brother's approval for me to sneak into those nations and capture Duke Ming alive, in order to redeem my crime at the Aman River."

Ruo Yan was silent for awhile before having a change of expression, "Right now, I am very busy with Fan Jia affairs; therefore, I cannot leave. Alright, I'll let you handle this. You have to place safety as priority. At this moment, the situation in Fan Jia is causing other nations to have a change of attitude towards Li Kingdom. Everything is unpredictable and even more dangerous. I will send someone to accompany you along the way, the two of you can help each other out."

Miao Guang was smart and quick-witted, after hearing that, she immediately knew who it was. Letting out a chuckle, she replied, "Fan Jia will have a huge war, Royal Brother is in need of a capable aide. If he were to follow me, then how will you manage?"

Ruo Yan laughed out loud, "With me here, it's more than hundreds of thousands of elite soldiers, is it really that difficult to deal with this weak nation of Fan Jia? Go ahead."

"Royal Brother is right. I'll follow through with your command."

Miao Guang took a bow, turned around and was about to leave when Ruo Yan's voice travelled from behind, "Wait a minute!"

Miao Guang turned back, "Is there another order Royal Brother would like to address?"

Ruo Yan's tall body stood up, he stepped down from the seat, and stopped right in front of Miao Guang. Within half a foot, gazing condescendingly at his sister's face as he slowly reminded her, "The incident at Aman River where you used personal matter to free Duke Ming, from today onwards, don't mention it again. However, I will never allow the same thing to happen once more."

Miao Guang stared right into Ruo Yan's eyes. After a moment, she gracefully bowed down and replied in a calm tone, "Rest assured, Royal Brother."

Miao Guang's image disappeared behind the door. Ruo Yan sat in the middle of the empty grand palace, he suddenly shouted out, "Someone, send for Si Qiang."

After a moment, a flawless dressed Si Qiang entered the door, he looked up and saw Ruo Yan standing in the hall, tall and majestic, a figure full of oppressive force. Si Qiang quickly kneeled down, "Upon Your Majesty's order, Si Qiang is here to serve you."

“Rise.” Ruo Yan turned his back to him, Si Qiang couldn’t see his face, he only heard the King of Li give an order, “Walk over to the mattress and lie down.”

“Yes.” Si Qiang carefully walked over to the mattress and gently laid down without glancing up at the King of Li, who was rumored to be terribly cruel.

He wasn’t a person from the Li Kingdom, Si Qiang was gifted to Ruo Yan by the Fan Jia Ministers as part of his harem to implore a peace treaty between the two nations.

Among the batch of 12 young courtesans that were brought along with him, all of them had good looks and were innocent. Not only the men, even the women, he had never tasted them before.

The first time he greeted Li King’s Ruo Yan, although his head was lowered, he couldn’t help sensing Li King’s attention focusing on him, giving him a needle pin sensation down his spine, and cold sweat dripping down throughout his body.

But strangely enough, after that day, Li King never summoned for him. While his peers were occasionally called for and were carried back with a bloody posterior lower half, after serving him.

An appalling wound...

Si Qiang heard that during the first time in serving a man, that forbidden area would inevitably hurt. After all, he is just a plaything within his grasp, no noble or royalty would take pity on a cheap object like this. That person wouldn’t care if this was his first time, just as long as he served his purpose as an entertainment.

And Li King Ruo Yan is the extremely frightful devil within those rumored legends.

“You’re trembling?”

The voice suddenly came from the top of his head. He was scared to the point that a chill ran down his spine.

Li King, the person who will violate his body, quietly came closer to him, sitting at one end of the mattress, two sharp, unfathomable eyes stared back at him.

“Your...Your Majesty...”

A slender finger was unexpectedly placed on his lips as that person softly commanded, “Don’t bite. Tonight, I don’t want to see your blood, hurry and close your eyes.”

Si Qiang released his bite from his trembling lower lips. He no longer cared what might happen as he closed his eyes.

He waited for that painful moment to come when he heard a voice full of authority asking him, "Si Qiang, do you know why out of the young men that were brought here, I can only remember your name?"

He warily replied, "Si Qiang doesn't know."

"Don't open your eyes, if you dare to open them, I will immediately gouge them out." Calmly warning him, Ruo Yan's tone became gentle as he laughed shallowly, "It's because you resemble someone."

Si Qiang didn't dare to ask him which person he looked similar to. He only complied with the command, tightly closing his eyes.

Ruo Yan seems to speak to him, but then it seems like he was talking to himself, sadly muttering, "That time when that person pretended to sleep with his eyes closed, he was very similar to you right now. As long as I gently touched him, he couldn't help but tremble."

He took one hand and touched Si Qiang's shoulder, and sure enough his whole body shivered.

"Are you pretending to sleep? Your pretend act isn't real, how can it fool me? Gently trembling like a small kitten with a cold, but yet your claws, the tip of it had destroyed tens of thousands of Li's troops."

Ruo Yan's fingertips tenderly caressed the soft smooth chin of Si Qiang. Occasionally using his fingernails to pierce fiercely at that smooth skin, though with not enough force to draw blood, the pain was enough for Si Qiang's eyebrows to furrow...appearing even more delicate and charming...

Si Qiang was warned beforehand so he continued to keep his eyes shut without opening a crack. He laid there on the mattress ignoring Ruo Yan's teasing.

Suddenly, he heard Ruo Yan's gentle voice again, "Don't be afraid. Though you're still fearful of me, there will be a day that I'll help you forget all about everyone else. Only I will be within your thoughts. Anything that Ruo Yan, I, wish to have, will never be out of my reach, do you understand?"

His gentle tone of voice was like he was intimately whispering to his lover; however, it seems like there was a bit of chilling coldness hidden within. Si Qiang heard every word, he was a bit surprised, but there's a portion where he can't seem to describe the feeling.

While he was searching for the word to describe it, he swiftly felt a warm sensation on his lips, forcing itself on his scared pale face.

Si Qiang lay still for awhile before he realized what was happening.

At that moment, he didn't know why, but on impulse, he forgot what he was ordered to do and involuntarily opened his eyes. Within that small space, he fell into the stare of a close pair of dark cold eagle eyes.

In a blink, it seemed as if his soul was stolen by those pair of eyes, his whole body went rigid.

"You dare to open your eyes." Ruo Yan lightly spoke. Like a hammer knocking against Si Qiang's skull, he regained his calm; staring at Ruo Yan in horror, he begged for forgiveness.

Ruo Yan looked at him blankly, the atmosphere stood frozen, almost difficult to breathe.

Just when Si Qiang thought he would be punished, the devil in front of him, who holds his life in his hands, said something unexpected as he revealed a hint of a smile, "Forget it, my mood tonight is very good, I'll spare your lowly life this one time."

When Ruo Yan finished, he didn't concern himself with Si Qiang anymore. He turned around and grabbed a book of documents on the table and quietly looked at it.

The room was unusually quiet, as if breathing seemed to have disappeared.

The latest documents were all reports about the recent harvest to the west of Li Kingdom. It wasn't anything interesting, but Ruo Yan continued to focus in reading it.

Upon that unyielding face, a rare trace of a tempting smile appeared.

That timid little rabbit, why has it gotten bolder than a tiger? Jumping everywhere, traveling around the world?

Ever since the campsite of Yong Yi was attacked, Ruo Yan thought that Rong Tian would hide him away.

Well, that's entirely swell, exposing his own whereabouts.

Xi Lei Duke Ming, I haven't seen you for many days now. Compared to before, you must be more handsome and brilliant, right?

CHAPTER 4

Yong Yin territory.

Aman River.

Feng Ming reminisced about the battle at Aman River and how people had named him as the Teacher of Warfare. It was also on the Aman River that Lu Dan kidnapped him from Rong Tian, causing Rong Tian to lose the throne, but yet brought smallpox to Dong Fan. Both nations had suffered a huge loss.

Because of these events, listening to the sound of the Aman River flowing beneath him was very difficult for Feng Ming.

Right now, he is sitting on the large luxurious ship of the Xiao Family, sailing along the Aman River, traveling to different nations, a wonderful trip he had never had before.

On the deck of the ship, there's a small table and a tray of fruits along with hot tea. Feng Ming and the maids were enjoying the view and entertainment. Chiu Yue was a bit upset with Feng Ming, since he didn't seem to pay attention to her singing. Chiu Lan, who was half sitting on the carpet was knitting a cloak for Feng Ming and told Chiu Yue that Duke Ming must be thinking about His Majesty.

"No, I'm not." Feng Ming's handsome face flushed red, he walked towards them, removed his boots and followed Chiu Lan's way of sitting on the carpet, "I was thinking about how to complete the task that my weird dad has assigned to me."

"Young Lord, please be careful with your speech." A voice with a guarded tone that can make anyone jump was suddenly heard beside him.

Feng Ming and Chiu Lan raised their heads in surprise, their eyes met with the stern young face of Luo Yun.

Luo Yun coldly continued, "Master is the number one swordsman in the world and is well-respected by everyone wherever he goes. Young Lord is the son of Master and also the successor of the Xiao Family's business, how can you use such a disrespectful tone to talk about the Master?"

Luo Yun was arranged by Luo Ning to be Feng Ming's bodyguard, therefore, he always has to be with Feng Ming as if glued to him, it's no different than Rong Hu. Unfortunately, his attitude compared with Rong Hu is thousand times worse.

Unsure of which part of Feng Ming irritates him, all day he would stand there silently with a gloomy face. If he does make a sound, it will be very harsh words.

Because of one word he inadvertently said, Feng Ming got scolded, his bitter face secretly thought, 'The swordsmanship is not bad, but the words: well-respected by everyone, needs to be reexamined.'

But as the son of that man, having a subordinate under the Xiao family admiring Master Xiao in front of him, Feng Ming has to pay special attention to the words he say so he admitted his fault humbly, "You're right, I was wrong. I'll correct myself." Turning to Chiu Lan, Feng Ming had a serious face, "I was just thinking about the request my father made."

The three maids have been irritated with Luo Yun's bad attitude for a few days now so they decided to completely ignore his existence. They asked Feng Ming, "What request did your father mention? Have we heard about it before?"

FM: He wants me to open up a safe route of transporting the luminescent sand within a year."

CY: It's just creating another water route. The Xiao Family has a shipping business so there must have been a lot of safe water routes already, unless there is something missing? That is a very *weird* request."

Chiu Yue deliberately mentioned the word "weird" and sure enough, Luo Yun snorted upon hearing it.

Chiu Xing pretended not to hear Luo Yun and purposely asked, "Is this really a difficult task for the Holy Master Xiao? It's just finding a safe water route. He is the world's finest swordsman, well-respected everywhere, isn't he?"

CL: No need to worry. Duke Ming is very smart. No matter what task Holy Master Xiao assigns, our Duke Ming will accomplish it. Otherwise, why would Master Xiao give the whole Xiao Family business to Duke Ming? If he already accepted Duke Ming as his son and gave him the nautical map, then he already believes in Duke Ming's ability.

CY: (nodded) Therefore, all of the Xiao family's assets from the ship vessels, property, houses, *men*, are all supervised by Duke Ming. Duke Ming is the best.

CL: Of course.

Speaking of vindictiveness, how could Luo Yun win against the three palace maids who grew up within Xi Lei palace?

Although Luo Yun's face was ashen, his restraint was quite fearful that he was not angry, still standing upright to the side without looking away.

Feng Ming felt a bit wary and scolded the girls for talking too much. They finally got back to the topic of transporting the luminescent sand within one year.

CY: Then you haven't thought of how to do it yet?

FM: So far, I just know that the luminescent sand is produced in Dan Lin and transporting it is not an easy task. Other than that, I don't know anything else, so how can I think of a good method?

CX: Shouldn't this be simple? Isn't the Xiao Family's fleet of ships very powerful? We can ask Luo Deng, he must know the answer.

After calling for Luo Deng, he came over and told them about the overall story regarding the transportation of the sand from Dan Lin. While spreading the map on the table, he explained to Feng Ming and the others.

LD: The island of Dan Lin has a narrow and long shape. It's a relative distance from our mainland. If one starts from Bei Qi, Bo Jian, Tong Kingdom or Xi Lei, he can reach Dan Lin. However, the quickest way to Dan Lin is still...

CL: Tong Kingdom? Is it the place we should be heading to now?

CY: Duke Ming hasn't decided yet, he said we need to see the overall situation first. That reminds me, the night before, Duke Ming was really amazing. You were standing on the bow of the ship, in front of everyone, expanding your chest and saying that this trip is to unite the world as one and not leading oneself into death. It really made everyone excited.

Another faint but audible snicker came from someone. Apparently, it was from Luo Yun.

FM: (feeling embarrassed) You don't need to recall that night. Try not to interrupt others while they are speaking. Be careful, for Luo Deng might be angry and roll up the map without teaching us.

LD: I wouldn't dare. The strait that is between Dan Lin and the mainland is called...

CY: It's the Mo Eastern Strait!

Feng Ming stared at Chiu Yue, she smiled tenderly.

CY: Aiya, I know my mistake, I won't interrupt next time.

LD: Starting from the mainland and traveling along the Mo Eastern Strait, we'll reach the Dan Lin shore, which is the fastest and most convenient way.

FM: Then, we follow along the Mo Eastern Strait and head forward on this fast and convenient way.

Feng Ming suddenly noticed that Luo Deng didn't respond, so he asked, "Is there a problem? Oh, I know, could it be that this current ship can't go past the Mo Eastern Strait?"

LD: (shook his head) If we want to sail across the Mo Eastern Strait, this ship is large enough to do so. In the past, we have started from Xi Lei and Tong Kingdom to reach Dan Lin successfully.

FM: Oh? Successfully? Then why do I need to set up a new water route?

Could it be that this strange Holy Master Xiao finally has a bit of fatherly love, deliberately picking a matter that has been resolved as a condition to becoming a successor, a wonderful compensation for he felt guilty not raising his own child?

LD: Although the ship successfully reached Dan Lin, the problem was spending a large amount of gold to buy a ship full of luminescent sand, which was robbed by pirates. The Mo Eastern Strait is the pirate's territory. I heard that there are four to five large main pirate groups. Smaller groups of pirates are countless. If we want to use this route to return safely, I'm afraid it's impossible.

Feng Ming was dumbfounded.

That's right, he finally came to understand a bit about Xiao Zong. This famous Holy Master is definitely someone who is guiltless.

Pirates!

Chiu Yue uneasily asked, "The pirates would even dare rob from the Xiao Family's ships?"

LD: The largest power the Xiao Family's fleet holds are within the inland nations. The pirates, who are born at the sea, live among the sea with roaring the waves every day. They almost inherently know how to take advantage of the vagaries of the sea and send their opponents to their death. The Mo Eastern Strait has reefs, shallow water and changing currents, which they are well aware of. After all, we are mostly inland people. Dealing with navigation and naval battles, how can we compare to them?

CY: Could it be that even though the ship was robbed by pirates, Master Xiao can just easily forget about it?

Speaking of this, Luo Deng wrinkled his eyebrows, revealing an expression he dare not recall, "The pirates of the Mo Eastern Strait are notoriously cruel. Robbing a ship of luminescent sand is not a problem, but they didn't even spare a single person. Slaughtering everyone on board. After half a month, when the ship drifted downstream to the coast of Bo Jian did we learn about the news. Ah, that time the scene on the ship was really tragic..." He gritted his teeth before continuing, "After our Master got the news, he was furious. He immediately sent for the largest and sturdiest ship, prepared a variety of food and weapons, and swore that he would kill all of those ruthless pirates." Reaching to that part, he suddenly stopped.

Everyone who was listening at this point were uptight, "And then, what happened?"

Even Chiu Lan took interest in the story and raised her head to listen to Luo Deng.

Although Luo Yun's expression did not change, his ears perked up, apparently also listening to Luo Deng's story.

Luo Deng continued in a low voice, "I was waiting at the shore when the ship returned. The number of Xiao subordinates at that time was a total of 170 people; when returning Master was the only one remaining on board. Both the inside and outside of the ship were covered in blood and hundreds of strange markings as if they were violently attacked."

CY: What really happened on that ship?

LD: After Master left the ship, he never spoke about it so who would dare ask? After that point on, no one mentioned about delivering the luminescent sand.

No need to ask, Xiao Zong's pride was damaged that day. However, it was his unparalleled swordsmanship that saved his life.

Feng Ming gasped.

His face was a bit pale. Xiao Zong couldn't accomplish this task, so he gave this task to him?

Anyway, there is only one truth, which is, you can be anyone, but you definitely cannot be the son of a demented person.

LD: The luminescent sand is a precious material to cast sharp weapons. It is a very essential item for every nation. As long as it can be delivered, no matter how expensive the cost, there are people who are willing to buy it. However until now, besides the small handful of two bags, there is no one who has the ability to transport a whole ship back.

At this time, Rong Hu appeared and listened in. In fact, he had heard Xiao Zong mentioning about the luminescent sand.

Xiao Zong requesting Feng Ming to open up a safe route for transporting the sand was something he already knew. Although the journey back is a bit difficult, he still couldn't imagine that even Xiao Zong had trouble trying.

RH: If the pirates of Mo Eastern Strait are out of control, how did Xiao family's ship successfully arrived in Dan Lin?

LD: Although the luminescent sand is extremely valuable on the mainland compare to gold, in Dan Lin the sand is abundant. In fact, their whole shore is filled with luminescent sand. But according to regulations, if merchants were to purchase the sand, they need ask Dan Lin department to buy it. Overall, one pound of gold can get you two pounds of sand, of course the pricing is very demanding, but as long as it can be brought back, we can put one pound to pound, double the price of gold to sell and resell it for 19 times more. Our ship is specially manufactured for the sea, not only it is large, but it can also travel at a fast speed. There is rarely any ships that can catch up to us. At the time of departure to Dan Lin, we were carrying one hundred pounds of gold; the speed of the ship was not hindered. The men onboard the ship were intelligent sailors. If they saw a problem, they would increase the speed and escape from the

pirates. However, on the journey back, the one hundred pounds of gold turned into two pounds of extremely heavy sand.

Everyone suddenly realized the issue.

A ship carrying a heavy load would be hard to escape the pursuit of pirates.

Once Luo Deng finished, the deck went silent.

Feng Ming felt miserable, thinking that he should have enjoyed the view instead of talking about opening a route to transport the luminescent sand.

Luo Yun who hadn't spoken, sneered at this moment and asked, "One year, that time will pass by quickly, does Duke Ming have a solution to this problem?"

To get Feng Ming's mind off of the whole dodging pirates and finding a new water route task, Chiu Yue diverted everyone's attention to a harbor and asked Luo Deng what place is it.

Luo Deng tells them that this is the largest harbor in Yong Yin and is called Fen Cheng, where many merchants do their trading and where the Xiao's usually unload their cargo. Although Fen Cheng can't be compared to the capital of Yong Yin, it is still very lively.

LD: Without prior news, we will not enter the Tong territory, so right now we have a lot of free time, does everyone want to take a detour at Fen Cheng for a bit?

Chiu Xing and Chiu Yue urged Feng Ming to make a stop at Fen Cheng.

Feng Ming frowned, looking over at Rong Hu, "Can we really go?"

Under the close supervision of the two factions of bodyguards, the luxurious and comfortable ship became an impenetrable cage. The three palace maids, Chiu Lan, Chiu Yue and Chiu Xing, along with the three guards, Luo Yun, Luo Deng and Rong Hu, they were like six tall plasters stuck together, not leaving his side. In addition, ten more guards surrounded each side, with a total of twenty strong bodyguards around him. An impressive steel wall that brought Feng Ming to tears – those who saw him from the outside wouldn't understand. They would probably think that he is too arrogant and despotic; that he had offended so many people and that many assassins are constantly trying to kill him. Therefore, he needs all these people to protect his little life. A very pathetic situation indeed ~

As for night time, Rong Hu and Luo Yun would stay beside his bed and look after him.

The feeling of being watched while sleeping made Feng Ming very uncomfortable at night. He repeatedly issued a protest, but Rong Hu said, "His Majesty reminded us that even when Duke Ming takes a bath, we are to look after him every second. At present, I have loosen up the order

quite a lot. If Duke Ming continues to have an opinion about it, I can only retreat to the strict orders that were handed down by His Majesty and follow it accordingly.”

After saying that, Feng Ming didn't dare to protest anymore. So now, whenever he wakes up in the middle of the night and if it isn't Rong Hu's face that he sees, then it will be Luo Yun's cold expression, complex eyes and a poker face staring back at him.

Feng Ming looked at Rong Hu piteously.

Rong Hu was amused by his expression and chuckled, “You can stop by and enjoy Fen Cheng, but the guards will follow closely behind and Duke Ming must ensure to not cause trouble along the way.”

“Of course, of course.” Chiu Yue nodded in behalf of Duke Ming, “Also, Duke Ming will ensure that he will not be left behind, he won't secretly leave out of our sight and will follow the rules.”

Feng Ming pinched Chiu Yue's face for teasing him, but that helped him take his mind off of the luminescent sand task.

As everyone nodded their heads in agreement, Feng Ming and the rest turned to look at Luo Yun.

This person would usually oppose to everything Feng Ming says so it would be natural for him to interfere with this.

Luo Yun stood to one side, seeing how everyone's eyes were upon him, he asked coldly, “What?”

“That...” Feng Ming swallowed his saliva and carefully asked, “Should I be able to take a stroll in Fen Cheng? You see, Luo Deng said that there's no problem with the schedule and this harbor is also one of the main transshipment point of the Xiao's.”

Feng Ming doesn't know why but although Luo Yun is much younger than him, he emits a cold aura that no one would dare to look down upon.

The first time he met, he felt that Luo Yun's father, Luo Ning, had an aura that was even more cold than his, but for these past days, if Feng Ming carefully examined him, he felt Luo Yun had exactly the same energy.

The outside appearance can be described as cold, but in other words, it's an extremely unspeakable chilliness down to the bones.

Besides Feng Ming, the three palace maids are not in support of his coldness. They all feel that Luo Yun is bullying others and doesn't understand the meaning of hierarchy.

Luo Yun glanced at Feng Ming and seemingly didn't want to create eye contact, so he casually looked past him and answered, "You are free to go wherever you want, Young Lord. We as subordinates, don't have the qualifications to interfere."

Feng Ming was overjoyed.

If it was Luo Yun's dad, then that Luo Ning would be angrily grumbling about it all day.

Taking advantage that Luo Ning is on a different ship and doesn't have a say in this, everyone quickly went to prepare to disembark.

Luo Deng rolled up the maps and sent a command to his men to raise the banners in the helm and bow of the ship. It is to notify the ships with cargo to also prepare to disembark at the dock.

Feng Ming was dragged inside by Chiu Yue and Chiu Xing to change into a different outfit. When he went outside, he saw Chiu Lan was still stitching his cloak. Chiu Lan wanted to finish it up, but Chiu Yue told her to finish it after they come back from touring around Fen Cheng.

After stepping off the ship, Feng Ming enjoyed the scenery for a bit before a middle-aged man suddenly came running towards them. Before he could reach Feng Ming, he was stopped by Xiao's bodyguards. Luo Deng told them to let him through and explained to Feng Ming that this man here is the city official of Fen Cheng pier. He is in charge of taxation along with inspection of the shipments.

LD: The Xiaos are his long time customer and have yielded a large amount of money to the Yong Yin royalties. He knew that Young Lord was here so he would surely greet you with hospitality.

FM: How does he know who we are?

LD: Young Lord, please take a look at our banners on the ship. Even a blind person will know that the Young Lord of Xiao will be present on the ship. Also, I'm considered as a manager of the Xiao's fleet, so the person who I accompany should be no other than the Young Lord of Xiao, right?

RH: The news of Duke Ming traveling around to inspect the Xiao Family shipping business is known worldwide, not knowing is not an option. If they can't guess half of it, then they must be fools.

While saying a few words, the middle-aged man appeared in front of them. He greeted Feng Ming respectfully and introduced himself as Tai Can.

Luo Deng tells Tai Can, "Our Young Lord here doesn't like to be caged in so he wanted to take a tour of Fen Cheng for a bit."

TC: Allow me to lead the way as a guide during your visit here in Fen Cheng. Right now it's spring, Fen Cheng has a unique flower in bloom, called "Youzi or Wandering" flower. It's very fragrant and the scent is everywhere, therefore, this city is called Fen Cheng.

Feng Ming accepted Tai Can's offer and then asked Luo Deng if they have any horse carriages on the ship, since he wanted to tour around the place.

LD: Why would we have that ready on the ship? Every large ports like this, the Xiao Family has a horse carriage and lodging prepared and easily available. All of these, I have ordered my men to prepare beforehand, however, the timing was quite sudden so at the moment we only have six carriages available. It seems that the Young Lord will have to ride the same carriage as us.

Feng Ming knew that the Xiao Family had a huge amount of money, but he never thought that their transportation system was more efficient than the royalties. When Rong Tian travels, he can only supply the items within Xi Lei, once outside of Xi Lei, it's not very convenient.

There was a faint scoff coming from behind.

Without looking back, everyone knew it was Luo Yun.

The city of Fen Cheng was near the city port and with a quarter of an hour, the carriage arrived in front of the gates.

Inside the carriage, Feng Ming could smell the fragrance of the flowers.

CY: This type of flower, if used for wine, it will be very fragrant.

CX: You are definitely an alcoholic, is the wine bug itching in your stomach?

CY: I'm not an alcoholic, I'm just curious.

Tai Can explained to them that people who come to Fen Cheng usually test their Wandering wine, since it can only be produced in Fen Cheng. If they pass by without drinking it, it would be a pity.

Feng Ming was very curious about the name "Wandering" and asked Tai Can about it. Tai Can led them to a small hut to experience the wine first while he explained about the origin.

Everyone noticed that the place didn't seem like a high end restaurant and were suspicious, but Tai Can told them that in order to taste authentic wine, this is the right place to experience it.

After the wine was tested for poison and appeared non-toxic, Feng Ming and the maids took a taste of it, while Rong Hu and Luo Yun refused, stating that if an assassin were to come by, they need to be on high alert.

Tai Can asked them if they could taste a bit of tears in the wine and they all agreed. Feng Ming really enjoyed the taste of the wine, that he wanted to buy a few to have Rong Tian enjoy it. However, Tai Can told Feng Ming that he can't carry the wine outside the city of Fen Cheng. If he does, the wine will become sour and non-drinkable.

He then explained about the origin of the wine. According to legends, there was a woman named Mrs. Li. She was a young widow, who planted flowers for a living and brought up a child named "Youzi." When Youzi was 16 years old, it was the beginning of spring, and he decided to leave the city to make a living. After bidding farewell to his mother, he never returned. Mrs. Li waited for her son's return every day. But she eventually died within her garden of flowers and at her resting place, a Youzi tree grew.

At the beginning of every spring, every year, the Youzi flowers would bloom and the fragrance would linger for miles as if Mrs. Li is calling for her son to come back.

Tai Can stopped; the lively and cheerful atmosphere suddenly became silent.

Luo Deng sighed, "I've come to Fen Cheng many times and every time I listen to that story, it still seems like the first time and I'm still saddened by it. Especially in early spring, the scent of the Wandering flowers is simply heartbreaking."

No one knew what Luo Yun was thinking, but his face was bleak.

TC: They said that the Youzi tree appeared because of Mrs. Li. She wholeheartedly wanted to wait for Youzi to return. The Wandering flowers are her thoughts and the Wandering wine is her tears. Therefore, anything of the Youzi, once they are removed from the city of Fen Cheng, it will immediately wither and the wine will become sour.

While thinking about the story, Feng Ming recalled about himself being an orphan, not gaining the parental love from Xiao Zong or Lady Yao Ye and perhaps the closest parental love he received was from Empress Dowager. However, Empress Dowager had been angry with him about the Grace's Order, so Feng Ming felt guilty about it.

At this moment, Feng Ming continued to drink and then muttered a line regarding motherly love for her child and how it is hard for a child to repay the kindness, etc...

After muttering the poem, a loud clapping sound was heard. Feng Ming turned around and noticed that the person who applauded was not one of his people, but a man standing outside the hut. Seeing that Feng Ming was staring at him, he let down his hands and smiled, "My name is Mu Sa, I coincidentally passed by and heard Young Master recite a short poem with deep affection, which I'm amazed, therefore, I could not help but praise you by my applause. I deserve death for frightening you."

This man wore a plain blue robe, completely spotless without dirt; there was also a paper fan placed within his belt. His black eyes were refined and serene; it was evident that he was not a

simple commoner upon seeing him. His speech was gentle and eloquent, giving his audience a good impression.

Upon seeing such a figure, Feng Ming was very happy, and laughed, "I feel ashamed, I was just drinking and casually said a few words. Brother Mu is too kind, how about coming inside and drinking a few cups with me."

Before he finished, Rong Hu and Luo Yun gave out a warning sound almost simultaneously, their meaning was both clear and simple. Due to a matter of safety, they requested that he shouldn't come in contact with strangers.

Mu Sa was about to nod in agreement, but hearing the two men at the table expressing their thoughts, he immediately knew he was not welcomed. This person was exceptionally smart; facing Feng Ming, he declined, "I have other things to attend to, I can only thank you, Young Master for your kind thoughts. If we are destined to meet, then perhaps we will meet again in the future. Can I ask for your name?"

"Ah? My name is Feng Ming."

After hearing Feng Ming's reply, he didn't have a change in expression or attitude, he faintly smiled, "So it's Xi Lei Duke Ming, Young Lord of Xiao, your name is like lightning beside one's ear. It's unfortunate that we don't have prior affinity. If in the future, Duke Ming does come to Bei Qi and has free time, you can come visit me at my place." He politely bowed, turned around and then left.

Feng Ming quickly shouted, "Hey, you still haven't said where your home is!"

Blankly watching the new acquaintance disappear, Feng Ming sighed and felt a bit sad that he didn't get to know that person a bit more, but he couldn't blame Rong Hu and Luo Yun.

He began drinking some more and that's when Tai Can went and told Feng Ming about his true intentions in bringing Feng Ming to this place and telling him about the Wandering flowers and wine.

Tai Can begged Feng Ming to help him in saving his brother-in-law. Apparently, his brother-in-law owns the wine business and was captured, leaving behind his pregnant wife and elderly mother. Although Tai Can is an official in Fen Cheng, he doesn't have the means to save his brother-in-law and wishes Feng Ming to lend a helping hand.

Feng Ming tells Tai Can to calm down and explain everything clearly. However, before he could explain everything, something unexpected happened.

CHAPTER 5

"Duke Ming, watch out!" Rong Hu's shout travelled through his ears, Luo Yun simultaneously jumped and rolled over towards Feng Ming.

Feng Ming staggered after being pushed aside by Luo Yun and Rong Hu. Even though he was slightly disoriented, he still heard a strange crash along with a loud sound as if a heavy object fell from above. The sound of weapons withdrawing from their sheaths were heard.

The three palace maids screamed out. Feng Ming motioned them to come over to where he was hiding. The guards outside already removed their swords and surrounded the area. Five or six of them pointed their swords at Tai Can and his mother, who was running the place at that time.

Nothing seemed to happen except for a dead body falling down in the middle of the inn, destroying the roof above.

Chiu Lan asked if that person was an assassin.

RH: If he is an assassin, then he must be very stupid.

Rong Hu took a look outside and around the inn; he concluded that this small inn is part of a three story building, which this person must have fallen from and coincidentally landed where they were sitting. Luckily, the rooftop is quite old and has an opening; therefore, they could detect any falling objects.

Luo Yun checked the body again and added that this person must have been thrown during some sort of dispute and died upon impact.

RH: I don't know who did this but they dare to commit a crime within soldier's territory.

Since it wasn't an assassin, the surrounding guards placed their swords back into the sheaths.

Feng Ming stepped out and wrinkled his eyebrows, "Judging by his clothes, he seems to be a Fen Cheng soldier." Placing his gaze towards Tai Can.

Tai Can felt that he had been experiencing bad luck lately. Because of his brother-in-law, he tried to come up with a meticulous plan, but yet this Mu Sa person came along and now there's a dead person falling from the sky. Not only that, but he was almost killed by Feng Ming's guards, the shock scared him so much that he was still trembling.

LY: It's not uncommon for someone to die. Why is Young Lord worried?

RH: This person is dead. Either way, this place is not safe. Duke Ming is of high status, we mustn't stay long. Why don't we head back to the ship and continue with the conversation.

Luo Deng agreed.

Since the majority agreed, Feng Ming decided to follow along and leave Fen Cheng city, climbing onto the horse carriage, bringing along Tai Can and his mother.

When they headed outside the city, Chiu Yue noticed that the Wandering flower she placed on her head, suddenly withered.

A trip to Fen Cheng that started out in high spirits quickly ended in sadness and fear.

Once inside the ship, Feng Ming remembered about Tai Can and his mother so he ordered someone to bring Tai Can so he can continue talking about his brother-in-law's problem.

Tai Can didn't imagined that Feng Ming would listen to him after what had happened today so he was very grateful.

TC: My brother-in-law is a wine brewer. Within Fen Cheng, everyone know about him. He saved up a bit of money to open a wine inn and the profit was not bad...to make it clear... the three story building Rong Hu talked about was my brother-in-law's business a month ago.

Feng Ming finally understood as he felt it was strange earlier how Tai Can is an official, so why would he married off his sister to a wine brewer on a small inn. It seems that his brother-in-law also owns a building.

FM: Then that building as of now...

TC: If I continue the I angrier get...

Feng Ming tells Tai Can to stand up and orders Chiu Yue to bring over the tea. Tai Can was surprised at how kind Feng Ming was towards him, he even helped him up from his kneeling position.

TC: My brother-in-law owns an inn and my little sister is pregnant. Their living each day is very good. However, three months ago, a disaster came, the higher ups suddenly ordered my brother- in-law to transport his wine to the capital. But once the Youzi wine leaves Fen Cheng, it becomes sour once arriving in the capital. That's why my brother in law's inn was closed, his business shut down, even my sister and mother-in-law were forced outside their homes. My sister only has a little amount of money on her so she got her mother a small wine inn to pass the days.

Feng Ming was upset upon hearing this, but he remembered what Lie Zhong Liu told him about staying calm and not get easily upset over certain matters.

FM: If he is imprisoned in Fen Cheng's jail, you are an official, you can go plead for his innocence and ask for a retrial.

Tai Can said that he plead to everyone he knew and even to General Le Ting, the one in charge of the case.

Feng Ming asked him about General Le Ting.

TC: He is under the command of the King, as a General in charged of this area, he holds the power of execution. Whether my brother-in-law lives or dies is within his hands. I have visited his residence several times, and gave a lump sum of treasures my ancestors had accumulated to gift him, therefore he was able to reconsider.

FM: He agreed to release your brother in law?

TC: It would be great if that's the case. My brother-in-law did commit a crime of deception towards the court and deserves death, but the Great General reconsidered to allow another trip on the Youzi wine to be sent to the capital again. If the same thing happens (the wine becomes sour), then he will be executed. My brother-in-law is the main support in the family, if he gets killed then it would be the same as killing his entire family.

Tai Can continued saying that as long as the time of execution is stretched out, he still has a chance to find a powerful person to help save his brother-in-law.

Feng Ming felt a bit prideful after knowing that he is considered a powerful person and people are requesting his help. He also believed that the strange wine might have something to do with chemistry but since he isn't a chemist and doesn't have the necessary items to test, he can't really help in this area.

Tai Can continued to beg Feng Ming to him save his brother-in-law, saying that if Duke Ming doesn't help then his brother-in-law is a goner. Feng Ming told him not to be rash and that he didn't say he wouldn't help. Tai Can was overjoyed and rushed inside the ship to inform the elderly woman.

Looking towards the other, Feng Ming asked them what they should do.

Luo Yun was as cold and indifferent as ever, if he doesn't want to talk, he won't open his mouth, however, it was rare for him to speak first, but yet he gave Feng Ming another splash of cold water, by saying, "Their life and death is their business, why is Young Master adding another

bothersome matter for yourself? Also, that Tai Can is clearly a man filled with tricks, he's definitely no simpleton."

Feng Ming was used to Luo Yun's attitude for a few days already, so he patiently said, "This person life that has been captured, how can we just sit idly and not save him? If we encounter an unjust matter, we need to lend a helping hand. If we don't have a feeling of chivalry, wouldn't it be a shame for you, someone who have excelled in martial arts?"

Luo Yun learned martial arts when he was little, other than Luo Ning who taught him, other skilled experts also helped guide him along the way. Everyone taught him that he needed to kill people swiftly and accurately, in cold blood without mercy or hesitation. No one had ever told him anything about 'encountering an unjust matter, one needs to lend a helping hand.'

Luo Yun couldn't believe that someone like Feng Ming could spurt out sharp words to lecture him. After a long silence, he coldly shouted out, "Chivalry is not within the guidelines of the Xiao family."

FM: Each day that I am the sole master, it will be part of the Xiao family guidelines.

Luo Yun closely observed him, his eyes were the same, the eyes of a heartless killer. Feng Ming calmly faced him, but inside, a small drum was ringing out chaotically. He thought all the men in the Xiao family must be influenced by his strange dad, causing Luo Yun to be heartless as well. Feng Ming wondered if tonight, while he is sleeping and unalert, would Luo Yun take a stab at his heart? Thinking about this, he definitely must tell Rong Hu to protect him at all costs and Chiu Lan will just have to spend the night by herself. Since Chiu Lan has to be alone by herself at night, she probably won't blame Feng Ming. At most, she'll just pinch Rong Hu's ear while they are alone together.

Thinking about Rong Hu getting his ear pinched, Feng Ming couldn't help but giggle to himself.

Everyone around him thought that Feng Ming would be scared after coming in contact with Luo Yun's eyes, but were surprised seeing how he was able to smile.

Even Rong Hu was thinking that the Duke Ming right now, compared to before, is more mature than when he was a young lad travelling for the first time to Fan Jia.

If he knew what Feng Ming was thinking, Rong Hu would probably faint.

RH: Duke Ming is right. If we can save someone from jail, then we shouldn't hesitate not to. Overall, it will be considered a good deed. However, what Luo Yun said about Tai Can being tricky, I also feel the same way. If he truly loves his sister, then it's natural to help her, why display a worn out wine inn for show? I feel that that worn out wine inn was there to make Duke Ming sympathize with him.

Luo Deng nodded his head in agreement, "It is something Tai Can setup. I have encountered him many times, he isn't a bad person, but he likes to play around with people's emotions. First, he'll bring you on a tour to enjoy the Wandering flowers, then have a taste of the Youzi wine, then use the elderly woman to gain your feelings and beg you to help him until you agree."

Feng Ming finally realized Tai Can's true intentions and agreed that his plan did work. He even complimented that if Tai Can was a General, he'll be very good with using 'Emotional schemes.'

Feng Ming then asked if they haven't stopped at Fen Cheng then Tai Can must have wasted his effort in preparing everything for them.

Luo Deng told him not to worry since Fen Cheng is a large port that the Xiao family usually stops by to transport cargo. Also, even if they didn't stop by, Tai Can would just waste his effort in setting up a worn out wine inn.

Feng Ming smiled a bit before telling them that they need to find a way to help Tai Can's brother- in-law.

That's when Ran Qing, one of Xiao's men came in and reported to them: "Yong Yin's General Le Ting heard that Young Lord was stopping by the area he oversees, so he came to make his greetings."

Feng Ming wondered why General Le Ting would personally come to greet him. He thought that maybe Le Ting didn't want him to interfere with Yong Yin affairs and purposely came to warn him.

Luo Deng tells Feng Ming that General Le Ting is an important figure, holding the Yong Yin army in his hands and because of this, Feng Ming needs to welcome him and show him respect.

Feng Ming agreed and decided he first needs to build a good relationship with Le Ting before directly talking about Tai Can's brother-in-law.

Le Ting appeared on the ship, he seemed to be around thirty five, thirty six years old. Described as tall and strong, he was wearing a green robe, without any body armor, just a sword hanging on his waist. Just one glance and one would know that he was someone who has been out on the battlefields. He brought five to six bodyguards onto the ship, standing in front of Feng Ming, his laughter sounded like a bell.

Pausing for a bit, he observed Feng Ming from top to bottom, his eyes brightened as he gave praises, "A young heroic man indeed. Not anything like a normal person. I've heard many rumors about what Xi Lei Duke Ming looked like and now I finally get to meet you. Definitely a compelling heroic aura, leaving a deep impression on everyone."

FM: A compelling heroic aura? Aiya, I was planning on using these terms to describe your greatness, I can't believe that General has already said them before me.

Feng Ming then led Le Ting into a grand luxurious room on the ship and ordered the maids to bring over some tea. Le Ting complimented on how huge the ship was and that even the King's palace wouldn't be this luxurious.

LT: Duke Ming shouldn't blame me for coming without inviting. It is because your reputation is very huge, and since your trip is heavily advertised, everyone knows about it, making me very curious, therefore, I had to meet this well known figure. Knowing that Duke Ming was stopping by Fen Cheng's port, I immediately called for horses to come here just in time, so I don't lose this opportunity.

So they eventually chatted for a bit about random things and the weather. Le Ting seemed like a very forthright person, very honest and direct, very compatible with Feng Ming's personality.

Feng Ming didn't want to go into the topic about Tai Can's brother-in-law so he decided to ask Le Ting about Mu Sa, whom he met briefly.

Le Ting thought about the many people in Bei Qi who could give Feng Ming a deep impression. He told Feng Ming he doesn't know anyone by the name of Mu Sa, but after much pondering, Le Ting laughed and said, "Haha, this young master hasn't changed one bit. Always coming up with tricks, that's why when I heard about his description and speech, he felt familiar."

FM: So the General knows who Young Master Mu is?

LT: What do you mean Young Master Mu? Duke Ming was lied to. This person's name is Du Feng. He is a noble from the royal family of Bei Qi. This person is talented beyond people, he loves to travel around, because he is carefree, handsome and has a high status, he is humble and educated, therefore, he knows a lot of powerful people in various nations. He just has one strange hobby, which is to challenge other people.

Feng Ming was surprised learning about Mu Sa's possible identity as Du Feng, well-known as "The Reluctant King."

When Feng Ming was in Xi Lei Palace and Rong Tian was his teacher, he once heard about Du Feng. He was described as: "If we talked about who has vast networking, is a smooth talker, has a noble individuality and a calm demeanor among the people, within the royal palace, from Xi Lei King to other King, no one can surpass Bei Qi's Young Master Du Feng, also known as "The Reluctant King."

Feng Ming wanted to know why Du Feng was called the Reluctant King, but Rong Tian never bothered to answer him so instead, Feng Ming went and asked Lie Er.

Lie Er told Feng Ming that the reason for the name wasn't because Du Feng didn't want to become King, it was one of his rumored romantic stories that happened.

LE: This Young Master Du's name is very well known. He is just a small branch from the royal family of Bei Qi, with no right to inherit the throne, but his family is of high status and is rich. He is handsome, suave and likes to travel here and there. He sympathizes with the women everywhere he goes, so he will seduce many ladies' hearts, it's strange to say, with so many women who loves him, not one of them has hated him. I heard there was one time when he went over to Zhao Bei and stayed at the palace for two to three days, he stole Zhao Bei Princess's heart and from that point on she would think about him for days and nights. At that time, Tong King's son had just turned fifteen and the King wanted to find a wife for him. He fancied Zhao Bei Princess, so he wrote several letters, hoping that the Princess would marry his son. Duke Ming, think about it, although Du Feng was handsome and clever, he cannot inherit the throne, while that other prince could become the King of Tong. If we compare the two, the majority of the women would choose the prince. However, Zhao Bei Princess refused no matter what, and was putting her life on the line screaming and shouting, she also wrote a poem to be sent back to the Prince of Tong. The poem read: Requesting the wind to linger at the self-injured branch who is thinking of a unrequited love, crying all her tears and yet still longs for that someone, please forgive me for refusing your kindness, for I still wish for the Reluctant King, my beloved Du. (this poem incorporate Du Feng's name in it: Feng, meaning wind and Du, his surname.)

Lie Er also mentioned that that poem was spread throughout the world, the more it spread, the more well known it became to the point that everyone began calling him, The Reluctant King.

That time, Feng Ming really wanted to know what kind of person Du Feng was, who could make Zhao Bei Princess not want to become Queen and realizing how he missed the opportunity to know Du Feng, Feng Ming felt at loss.

He asked Le Ting why such a person like Du Feng was wandering around Fen Cheng, is he looking for beautiful women or something?

Le Ting told Feng Ming that many people misunderstand Du Feng to be a lecherous person, but in fact he is a very upstanding person, loyal and a courageous person that is hard to find.

FM: Is General a friend of Young Master Du?

LT: How do I have such a fortune to? However, I heard many stories about him in the past, all of these stories were retold by trustworthy people so they aren't made up.

FM: Hurry and tell me, what I love most is listening to past stories.

Le Ting tells Feng Ming he is not good with words and believes his storytelling won't be vivid. Feng Ming still encouraged him to retell one story at least.

CHAPTER 6

"Ah" Le Ting hesitated for a moment. After looking at Feng Ming's eager expression, he couldn't bear to refuse, so he nodded and said: "Alright, I'll tell you, if it's boring, please don't blame me, Duke Ming."

"Of course I won't blame you."

Le Ting cleared his throat, he thought for a moment then slowly said, "I heard that year, the Yan Ting 2nd Prince, Zheng Nan, brought a few followers on his hunting trip in the forest. He shot a big deer, and while roasting it, he suddenly heard someone praising: smells good, smells good, can I eat with you? Zheng Nan saw that although the person wore a plain outfit, his appearance was still handsome and possessed a "high class quality", which made anyone like him at first glance, so he invited that man to enjoy the venison meat."

Feng Ming laughed, "Just hearing about handsome looks and high class quality, it means that that person is Young Master Du Feng?"

Le Ting sighed, "I knew I shouldn't tell a story, since there's no suspense at all."

Feng Ming was scared that he wouldn't speak anymore so he quickly apologized and said, "It's my bad for interrupting, go ahead and continue, General."

"That person was in fact Young Master Du Feng. He accepted Zheng Nan, 2nd Prince's invitation and sat by the fire. Zheng Nan handed him a venison, which he didn't hold back and ate it. After eating, he gave Prince Zheng Nan a thank you and left."

Feng Ming wanted to restrain himself from interrupting, but still couldn't help and whispered, "What fake name did he give Prince Zheng Nan?"

Le Ting smiled and replied, "He didn't speak much to Prince Zheng Nan, nor did he leave his name. He just ate and then left."

Feng Ming thought that his encounter with Du Feng was slightly better since he at least gave a name, Mu Sa, which showed a bit of respect. However, he was unsure as to which Du Feng gave face to, his Xi Lei identity or his Young Master Xiao's identity.

“Three years later, Yan Ting and Li Kingdom had a dispute. Because Li Kingdom was stronger, and couldn't be offended, Yan Ting King sent Prince Zheng Nan to Li Kingdom as an envoy and to apologize to the King of Li. Young Master Du was currently at Zhao Bei at that time and hearing about that, he immediately killed 12 horses, riding day and night without rest and finally arrived in Yan Ting before Prince Zheng Nan departed.”

Chiu Yue who was standing behind Feng Ming, listened to the story with her ears perked, thinking about that scary Li King Ruo Yan. She felt a chill and showed a trace of fear, she then whispered, “He went there to prevent Prince Zheng Nan from leaving.”

Le Ting shook his head and lowered his voice, “After meeting Prince Zheng Nan, he just said one sentence, ‘I'll be coming with you.’ As for how he knew about the news, his mean of transportation or how anxious he was along the way, he didn't mention a single a word.”

Although his storytelling skill was poor and he doesn't use facial expressions, but with this short, straight forward story, Le Ting had already placed his own unique charm into it. After everyone heard him say, “I'll be coming with you,” they felt their blood pressure rising.

“What happened afterwards?” Chiu Yue pulled tightly on her small handkerchief in hand, asking eagerly.

LT: When the envoy arrived in the capital of Li Kingdom, Li King deliberately wanted to make it difficult. He called Prince Zheng Nan into the palace to entertain his ministers. He asked Prince Zheng Nan, “Yan Ting wants to reconcile with Li Kingdom?” Prince Zheng Nan said that, that was his intention. Li Kingdom's Ruo Yan then asked him if he was really sincere; Prince Zheng Nan said he was. After Li King's Ruo Yan heard that, he ordered someone to bring out three similar cups of wine and then turned to Prince Zheng Nan to say, “There's one cup of poisoned wine, if you are really sincere, then choose a cup and drink it.”

Suddenly, a soft gasp was heard coming from Chiu Xing who carelessly whimpered after feeling nervous.

Chiu Lan's trembling voice asked, “So did Prince Zheng Nan immediately drink one?”

LT: Prince Zheng Nan hadn't spoke yet when Young Master Du went forward and randomly picked a cup on the table without any hesitation, he then swiftly drank all of it.

Feng Ming exclaimed, “He sure is really courageous, but fortunately, when he chose among the three cups, he chose the one without the poison.”

“Young Master Du doesn’t gamble.” Saying up to here, Le Ting’s eyes revealed a longing gaze of admiration. He continued, “After drinking the first cup, he placed it down and picked up the second one.”

“What?” All the people listening to the story shouted in unison, exposing a disbelief expression.

Is this Du Feng an idiot?

“Young Master Du drank all three cups of wine, even Li King was very surprised and asked him, “How is he willing to drink all three cups of wine?”

“Young Master Du just replied to him casually, I just guessed that these three cups of wine don’t have any poison. This place is the palace of Li Kingdom, if Li King wants to kill us, why would he waste his poisoned wine for? He just has to give out a signal and it’ll be done. I did this to prove to the world that Li King isn’t the type of person who would viciously kill an envoy who is requesting for reconciliation.”

“After Li King heard that, he lifted his head and laughed loudly, he then asked; “What if your guess was wrong?”

“Young Master Du said, “if I were to die for a friend, then that’s the greatest cause for a man.” After saying that, he turned around, grabbed Prince Zheng Nan and laughed for a long while as they left the palace. The guards and ministers were all stunned that no one dared to stop them.”

Le Ting finished his story, he sat quietly that even a needle dropping down could be heard.

Everyone felt shocked about Du Feng’s story. After a long moment, Feng Ming finally let out a long sigh and whispered, “Prince Zheng Nan is fortunate to have a friend like that.” Remembering about his missed-opportunity of getting to know Du Feng, Feng Ming regretted it badly.

LT: I have admired Young Master Du for many years now. Where did Duke Ming had a chance to encounter him?

FM: It was in Fen Cheng.

“So Duke Ming went to Fen Cheng today.” Le Ting saw his expression and guessed that he must had missed Du Feng so he was upset. Deliberately changing the subject, he smiled and said, “If you went to Fen Cheng, then you must experience the taste of the Youzi wine there. The taste is way better compared to other wines. All the precious wine within the palace can’t come close to the Youzi wine.”

When the Youzi wine was mentioned, Feng Ming was suddenly startled, oh, how could he almost forget the most important thing?

There was an innocent future father waiting to be rescued.

Feng Ming was feeling troubled about mentioning Tai Can's brother-in-law, so after hearing Le Ting mentioning about the wine, he decided to follow through with the topic, "I heard that when the Youzi wine leaves Fen Cheng city, it will immediately become sour, therefore, it can't be transported outside, is that right? If the capital of Yong Yin is faraway like this, even if one were to ship it out, it would be in vain."

Feng Ming then became quiet and carefully observed Le Ting's response.

"Ah." Le Ting placed the hot cup of tea down, his smile disappeared as he said, "Duke Ming must have seen the broken down inn Tai Can had arranged and heard his cry for help?"

He was so direct, it was beyond Feng Ming's expectation.

Feng Ming asked, "How did you know, General?"

Le Ting shook his head and smiled, "This Tai Can, he had used this "broken down inn" trick many times now. When I was patrolling the area in Fen Cheng, he also used this trick, so how could I not know? I saw that elderly woman cry and so I couldn't bear it, therefore, I ordered for the execution of her child to be rescheduled and gave them one more chance to ship the wine to the capital. Ah, but whether the wine is shipped or not, the result will still be the same. Overall, it's just lengthening the time of death."

Hearing him say that, Feng Ming felt even more strange, "If General also think that his brother-in-law is innocent, then why don't you release him?"

"If I could release him, then I would have already done it." Le Ting let out a sigh, he looked around and said, "Speaking of wine, I suddenly have the urge to drink. Can I have the blessing of drinking a precious wine from the Holy Master Xiao's wine collection?"

"Of course." Feng Ming commanded, "Bring the wine here." Turning to Le Ting, he said, "Although our wine can't compare to the Youzi wine, it's still considered as one of the finest wines."

Luo Deng sent someone to bring over the finest wine and invited Le Ting to drink and enjoy the scenery of the full moon outside. As for the other guests, they can enjoy the music and dance entertainment.

Feng Ming secretly praised Luo Deng for his quick thinking, nodded his head and said, "Good, what does General think about that?"

Le Ting had no objection, "That's great."

Leaving behind a group of subordinates, he followed Feng Ming and the others up on the deck.

After the maids prepared the wine and food, they silently left. Only Rong Hu and the other bodyguards stood on the deck with a bit of distance, forming a wall of protection.

Le Ting sat down, after drinking a cup of warm wine, he felt more relaxed, "Right now, there's only the two of us so it's much more convenient to speak. I, Le Ting, is a man who enjoys battling and hates most when there's an interruption, so let's get straight to the point. Does Duke Ming know that Tai Can is taking advantage of you?"

"Taken advantage by Tai Can?" Feng Ming was shocked, he asked, "Then is the story of his brother-in-law made up?"

"Although Tai Can is a cunning person, his mother passed away earlier on and he loves his little sister dearly. After his brother-in-law encountered an unfortunate matter, Tai Can came up with many different methods to save him, so this situation isn't made up." After talking in circles, Le Ting asked, "But does Duke Ming ever wondered about why he needed to ask so many people for help? But no one reached out to help save his brother-in-law's life?"

Feng Ming haven't thought about this issue, so he asked, "That's right, how come no one is willing to save his life?" He couldn't help but scratch his head.

Without prior preparation, Feng Ming displayed a silly foolish expression.

It was the first time Le Ting met Feng Ming, encountering the famous Duke Ming for a short time and seeing how the person in front of him who was known for his hidden wisdom become naive like this, an amazingly fast change in personality gave him quite a surprise. He couldn't help but smile, then spoke in a serious tone of voice, "There's something Duke Ming may not be aware of, even though Tai Can's brother-in-law's matter is a small one, but if anyone with high status were to intervene, then it would be a big matter within Yong Yin."

Feng Ming became even more surprised, "A big matter within Yong Yin?" His hand hadn't stopped scratching his head, "General isn't trying to scare me, are you? First, explain to me clearly, my stomach is quite small. (**note:** his stomach is quite small - meaning "he's not as brave as he looks.")" His behavior was very cute.

"It seems that Duke Ming isn't aware of the current situation in Yong Yin." Le Ting explained, "Yong Yin King has three Princes, his most favorite was the former Crown Prince Yong Yi, but

not long ago, when Prince Yong Yi was demoted, his position was taken over by the second prince, Yong Quan.”

Listening to his tone of voice, Feng Ming felt Le Ting was going to start talking about the entire situation within Yong Yin so Feng Ming quickly put on his studious face and nodded his head, displaying that he understood everything.

In fact, he had heard about these things earlier.

Yong Yi lost his Crown Prince position because Rong Tian got involved, requesting some help from Lie Er. As of right now, Lie Er and Yong Yi are stuck together like glue, it can be considered that after he went through a painful decision of choosing the ‘bear paw,’ he got his sweet delicacy.

If Le Ting knew how Yong Yi lost his Crown Prince title, then would he immediately draw his sword towards this little life of his, to take revenge for Yong Yin Kingdom?

FM: I have heard of Prince Yong Quan, who seems like a good candidate. Since he’s the Crown Prince now, he must be actively involved in national affairs than ever before.

Le Ting sighed, “What he had destroyed is already destroyed, he also ruined those words of positive involvement.”

“How is that?”

LT: All the problems started once Yong Quan became the Crown Prince. After His Majesty officially announced the change and made Yong Quan the Crown Prince, the whole place has changed from the past customs. He started bribing for power, with intention of controlling the highest military and political power.

FM: Sooner or later, Yong Yin will belong to him, so what’s the need of doing all this?

LT: Isn’t Rong Tong also recognized as the heir to the throne? So why did he suddenly revolted and stole Xi Lei King’s throne?

This one question of Le Ting made Feng Ming speechless.

The power of being King has always made people lose their mind.

“Right now, as big as the capital and as small as Fen Cheng is, everyone has been dragged into the dispute of the royal family. With the fight among the royalties above, the ministers and officials below either support Crown Prince Yong Quan or the Third Prince, so of course, they would be fighting among each other to the bitter end. Duke Ming is not a person of Yong Yin, so

you wouldn't know the consequences of getting involved within Yong Yin territory. With only me overseeing this area, there have been many soldiers fighting each other to death, so what's there to do? (**Note:** Ah, now we know why there was a dead body being thrown from the 3rd story building...) The soldiers who are stationed here, the former ones are of Third Prince Yong Cheng, and the new ones are sent by Crown Prince Yong Quan. Both sides seem to have several lifetimes of hatred, so they would glare at each other when meeting. I don't want to take any sides, and wish to be neutral when judging, but what's the result? Something still happened today."

Feng Ming remembered about what happened at Fen Cheng today, where he encountered that "body falling from the sky." Needless to say, the victim was involved in the struggle.

With such a brawl, even resulting in a dead body, the soldiers stationed here doesn't seem to be afraid of Le Ting's presence.

But when he thought about it, all these soldiers have their own factions. If Le Ting were to take one side, he will offend the other side; overall, he's just a General managing an area, not to mention Yong Quan, but even the Third Prince can't be offended. Under this kind of situation, remaining neutral and indifferent, may be the best option.

After pondering for a long while, still feeling puzzled, Feng Ming asked, "What does Tai Can's brother-in-law have to do with that? Could it be that Tai Can's brother-in-law is one of Yong Quan's people or perhaps Yong Cheng's people?"

"His brother-in-law is just a normal person, the one that they want to deal with is Tai Can, so they decided to take care of his brother-in-law first. The Tai family has always been loyal to the Third Prince, so the one who proposed for the delivery of the wine to the capital was one of Yong Quan's people. Therefore, if Duke Ming were to intervene in this matter, then it's the same as involving yourself among the two Princes' battle."

Feng Ming finally realized the huge matter.

No wonder Tai Can was anxious. But even if he knew Tai Can was hiding this from him, Feng Ming couldn't blame him. Even if Tai Can was daring, Tai Can wouldn't dare to tell him about the political affairs happening within the Yong Yin royalty, so he could only cry injustice without mentioning about the source of the intricacy.

"Since the two brother's fighting is so obvious, aren't they afraid of it being known?"

Le Ting sneered, "What if they know? Which royal family doesn't have an internal conflict? His Majesty is already of old age, so the majority of national affairs are given to the Princes. Back then, when Yong Yi was the Crown Prince, the two Princes were a little afraid. Now that Yong Yi no longer interferes with the political affairs, those two Princes are dissatisfied with each other,

so their fights are fiercer than before. In fact, this time when I came here, I received news that Tai Can came looking for Duke Ming to hear his plea. I was afraid that Duke Ming didn't understand the whole matter and would hastily intervene, bringing yourself into trouble."

Feng Ming recalled the man that was killed in front of him today. Because of internal affairs of Yong Yin, even a small city like Fen Cheng was dragged into it. He doesn't know how much more innocent people will have to die.

Lie Zhong Liu was right, once there is a power struggle among the royalties, innocent people's blood will flow like rivers.

Feng Ming finally understood why no one wanted to help Tai Can's brother-in-law. It was because if they did help, then they would be offending the Crown Prince Yong Quan. Feng Ming then asked Le Ting which person he sided with.

LT: Can I not choose? I was elected by His Majesty to come here. That year, the person who recommended me was Prince Yong Yi. Yong Yi sent a letter that recently arrived, notifying me that if I were to meet Duke Ming, he wanted me to take care of you.

Feng Ming suddenly understood. One can consider that Le Ting is one of Yong Yi's men, no wonder he doesn't want to involve himself within the conflict, but came enthusiastically here to explain to Feng Ming about the current situation.

Thus, Feng Ming felt more fond of Le Ting.

Feng Ming frowned and said, "Thank you General for coming here to remind me about the current situation among the Yong Yin royalty. I really don't want to get involved. However, I already promised to help Tai Can, not to mention about taking responsibility in this, but a person's life is precious, I cannot just think about the matter being troublesome that I just sit back and watch. General, your greatness, how can you be afraid of the difficulties in front of you in expense of abandoning the weak? This innocent person, I have to save him."

Le Ting heard that he didn't want any involvement and felt it was only natural and the best thing to do. He was about to nod his head when Feng Ming suddenly spurt out the words, "have to save him," which concluded that he had no thoughts of reconsidering, just like words that can't be taken back.

This time, Le Ting was stunned, raising his head to look at Feng Ming.

The calm young man in front of him was holding a small cup of wine. Underneath the moonlight, his skin was smooth as jade, gentle and delicate, but yet he could speak such noble words. Le Ting was completely surprised, he silently thought, *this Duke Ming seems weak, but yet there's such a fortitude, chivalrous side to him.*

Because of Yong Yi's letter, he was only planning on reminding Feng Ming and thus would complete his responsibility. At this moment, he can't help but admire Feng Ming, and immediately gave Feng Ming a large toast. After drinking all of it, he said, "Duke Ming is not someone from Yong Yin, but yet still cherishes the life of a minor person of Yong Yin. How can I not have a little bit of courage? Alright, since these days I have enough "bird poop", tonight when I get back, I will immediately order for Tai Can's brother-in-law's release, so their whole family will be reunited. If Prince Yong Quan send his indictment in the future, then I will take the blame."

"Absolutely not!" Feng Ming quickly waved his hand and said, "If General releases him, it just means that you are abandoning your neutrality, standing towards Third Prince's side. If Yong Quan knows of this, he will hold a grudge against you. Right now, he is the Crown Prince, who knows what kind of charges he will frame you with? Saving one person and yet harming another is not the best method, how about...how about..." For more than half a day, Feng Ming still couldn't find the best method, feeling embarrassed he smiled, "Give me some time to think..." He then started scratching his head.

His plan would have been very simple, which was to convince Le Ting, proving Tai Can's brother-in-law's innocence and begging Le Ting to spare him.

Up until now, he realized, the matters within the world is often times more complicated than expected.

Right now, Le Ting agreed to release the prisoner, but this warm-hearted General who wished to remain neutral, how can Feng Ming heartlessly push him into a dangerous partisan struggle?

Even if it's necessary to save a life, he cannot make Le Ting offend the two Princes, Feng Ming tried to think about a solution, but couldn't think of anything to solve this difficult problem.

He couldn't help but to think of Rong Tian.

That person is such a crafty guy, if he was here, perhaps his lips would curve upward, and then formulate a plan that would benefit both sides.

Bastard! Bastard! Right now, he should concentrate on thinking of a way to save someone, so why is he suddenly thinking about Rong Tian? Feng Ming secretly cursed himself for almost getting distracted and he asked Le Ting, "The edict to execute Tai Can's brother-in-law, what does the entire issue state?"

LT: The edict was sent by the officials in the capital, according to Yong Yin's law, if the order is not carried out, then they have the right to execute the person in charge of handling it. Because of Tai Can's plea, I have already stretched out the time and requested for another shipment of the wine to the capital once more, which is already pressing the issue. Overall, they know my

approach to such matter, and never suspected me as a person of the Third Prince, so this can be counted as giving me respect, and approved my request for another shipment of the Youzi wine. However, despite all the respect, they are only willing to give one chance, the second time won't be considered. This wine brewer, Chao An, once he's dead, as a local management general, I have to file a report about his charges and evidence to the capital. And in the future, if my report is approved, then the matter may even be implicated to the prisoner's relatives like Tai Can. If Tai Can is sentenced and imprisoned, his position as Fen Cheng's inspector of the lucrative pier will fall into the hands of Crown Prince Yong Quan's subordinates.

Chao An is Tai Can's brother-in-law.

Feng Ming widened his eyes and said, "So in the end, all this is because of the Fen Cheng's inspector position?"

Le Ting asked, "If not, then what else does Duke Ming think they want? A three story, broken down inn? The post as an inspector of the pier is inherited by the family. Tai Can usually does things carefully so they were unable to find fault. However, someone decided to propose such a sinister idea like this."

Feng Ming's eyes widened even more.
Oh God!

Is anyone going to teach him how to save someone from this chaotic political struggle here?!

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Rong Tian was wearing rain clothes with a hat, covering his tall stature. Together with Zi Yan, they immersed from the curtain of rain and stepped into Piao Xiang (Fragrant) House.

Within the place, there weren't that many guests, filling only three or four seatings, which occupied the best spot near the window, and were leisurely enjoying the spring rain outside. Both of them did not glance at the hall one bit, but instead walked up to the second floor, pushed open a door to a room at the end of the corridor and went inside.

Coincidentally, while Feng Ming was drinking wine, enjoying the garden scenery in Fen Cheng, and encountering a dead body crashing through the roof, it was the same time Rong Tian reunited with his men and arrived at the port of Wei Zhen, in Zhao Bei, along the border of Yong Yin.

This small port of Wei Zhen, can't be compared to the large harbor of Fen Cheng. However, traveling along the waterway of Yong Yin and entering Zhao Bei was the most convenient route at the moment for Rong Tian.

Within the small hall, incense was burning, on the table were four prepared side dishes and a jar of hot wine, just in time!

Zi Yan looked around for a bit and whispered a praise, "The same Xiao Liu Er, always preparing everything properly." He followed Rong Tian in a haste to arrive here, even though the days were tiring, he was still lively as ever, without the slightest sign of fatigue.

After the person came into the room, closing the door tightly, and looking out of the windows, making sure that no one had followed him, he quickly closed the windows. Facing Rong Tian who was sitting to one side, he gave a respectful salute, "Your Majesty, you've finally arrived here safe and sound, I was worried that you might encounter trouble along the way." Raising his eyes, he glanced at Rong Tian with eyes full of excitement.

Zi Yan and Xiao Liu were acquaintances. They were both promoted by Rong Tian and were placed under strict secret training. To prevent unexpected situations, two years ago, Rong Tian trusted Xiao Liu and sent him to Yong Yin as a spy. Today, they meet again and Zi Yan couldn't keep calm as he was overjoyed, "What do you mean, we finally arrived here safe and sound? Making it sound like we had to go through much difficulty to arrive here. With His Majesty's skill, it shouldn't be a problem traveling between nations."

Rong Tian looked as if relaxed, but in fact, he was really anxious as he wished to arrive in Dong Fan quickly. He patted Xiao Liu on the shoulder and ordered him to sit down, with a calm voice, he said, "Our elite troops in Zhao Bei have disguised themselves as laborers or sailors, separated into small groups, and will sneak into Yong Yin, using the waterway to pass through Li Kingdom to reach Dong Fan. I will be resting here for one night, tomorrow morning, we will immediately leave this place. Are you still currently working within Yong Quan's residence? What is the current situation in Yong Yin, right now?"

Two years without meeting, Xiao Liu appeared more thinner than when he was beside Rong Tian that year. Maybe he was taller, therefore, he looked more thinner, but his eyes were unusually seraphic, expressing a sense of confidence and tenacity.

Hearing Rong Tian's question, he clearly replied, "Yong Yin is currently in a mess, everywhere is chaotic. For a troop to cross Yong Yin is extremely easy, while the two princes are in a power struggle. People fighting among people, the more they fight the more terrifying it is, so who would pay attention to a fleet of sailors and a caravan of laborers?" Pausing for a bit, he revealed an uncertain look, feeling worried he said, "However, once Your Majesty pass through Yong Yin, why don't you head towards Bo Jian or Bei Qi, but instead decided to head towards Tong Kingdom? That place is enemy territory, if Ruo Yan were to discover..."

Rong Tian didn't care much as he brushed his hand lightly and laughed, "Ruo Yan is currently dealing with Fan Jia and his large troops are assembled there. His military power within Yong Yin and Tong Kingdom are virtually none. Even if his troops are there, I am not one bit afraid, not to

mention that his troops are not there. Bo Jian and Bei Qi are safe territories, but the detour is too far and would waste much time, I ...” He was going to say that he was worried that he won’t be able to return in time to protect Feng Ming who was traveling. He was so concerned that he formed an image of Feng Ming saying, ‘Great wisdom, Great courage,’ that he decided not to say anymore and just added, “I want to head directly to Tong Kingdom to save time, um, Feng Ming’s preparing for his travels, he should be in Yong Yin territory, if there’s any trouble, you have to protect him.”

Xiao Liu nodded his head and sternly said, “Your subordinate understands.”

“The battle between Yong Quan and Yong Cheng, the two princes, what is the current situation?”

Xiao Liu carefully answered, he worked inside the residence of Yong Quan, therefore, received the most news. He explained how ever since Yong Quan was named Crown Prince, he tried to seize power and Yong Cheng cooperated with those ministers whose interest were damaged to form a resistance. He cited many different vivid examples. Rong Tian was sipping wine while listening quietly.

Everything was according to his calculations.

That day when he designated Lie Er to persuade Yong Yi to abandon the Crown Prince title, he already guessed the outcome of today.

Right now, the situation has developed smoothly, he can’t let Yong Quan and Yong Cheng’s power be balanced, for they should continue to fight each other.

Feng Ming said something like: two cranes fighting, the fisherman will benefit.

After listening to Xiao Liu, it seems that Yong Cheng has been completely beaten and his trusted officials are being captured by Yong Quan. Once all of his men are completely captured, Yong Cheng will also be completely ruined.

If Yong Cheng is finished, then Yong Quan will seize full power, and Yong Yin can’t easily gain control as before.

Thinking about this, Rong Tian’s lips slightly curved, he casually said, “If that’s the case then the fight is unfair. We can’t just idly sit aside and not lend a helping hand for the weak. Xiao Liu Er, bring your ear over here.”

Whispering beside Xiao Liu’s ear, he gave two instructions.

After Xiao Liu listened to his words, his eyes suddenly lit up, he laughed, “Your Majesty, please rest assured. Your subordinate understands what needs to be done. Recently, Yong Quan

involved himself with Fen Cheng, that harbor over there, it seems like he wants to seize the harbor inspector post. We can start taking action there.”

“Good.”

“Without further ado, your subordinate must now rush over to Fen Cheng harbor. I’ll take my leave, Your Majesty, please take care.” Xiao Liu Er bowed down at Rong Tian, then turned over to Zi Yan, “Zi Yan, take care.” Even though his words were gentle, his eyes were filled with brotherly love.

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Fen Cheng Port.

Along the Aman River, the most impressive display was the large ship.

Feng Ming tried to put that small head of his to work, using all of his brain cells to figure out the best righteous action to do to help the weak.

Alas, he still didn’t have the talent to solve political matters. While on the battlefield, he can handle facing a bloody war, but with internal political affairs among the royalties, where subtle and underhanded means are done without a trace of blood, this kind of reality made him shiver.

He can’t let Tai Can’s brother-in-law die wrongfully...

He can’t let Le Ting be implicated...

He also can’t involve himself...otherwise this trip across each nations will become a seven nation alliance to kill Duke Ming...

What a difficult problem! If Rong Tian was here, it would be great.

Feng Ming frowned, he poured a few cups of wine and consecutively drank them all at once. Silently looking at the moonlight reflected on the tabletop, the light bounced into his eyes, in a slight momentary glance, everything looked blurry that he couldn’t see clearly.

“I can’t see clearly...” Feng Ming mumbled foolishly, he didn’t know what came to his mind, but he suddenly shuddered, his dark eyes instantly brightened, his hands slapped fiercely upon his thighs as he cried out, “I finally figured it out!”

“What did Duke Ming figure out?” Le Ting quickly asked.

Feng Ming didn't answer right away, he called Rong Hu over and asked, "Where is Tai Can right now?"

"He's inside the lower cabin, together with the old lady."

"Call Tai Can over here."

Rong Hu left immediately.

Within a short moment, Tai Can was brought over. When he saw Le Ting, his face went pale since he figured what he tried to conceal was exposed to Feng Ming, he timidly bowed down and said, "What orders does Duke Ming have?"

Feng Ming glanced at him and laughed, "You there, stop pretending, the whole situation about the Princes; I'm currently aware of it. You sure are daring, even wanted to drag me into this utter chaos."

Tai Can immediately knelt down, trembling, "Duke Ming, please forgive my indulgence, I had no other choice and nowhere to turn for help."

"Why not ask for your Third Prince for help?"

TC: Since Yong Quan is currently the Crown Prince, Prince Yong Cheng is forced into a situation where he can't lift his head. All of us who are suspected to ally with Prince Yong Cheng are being persecuted. How can Prince Yong Cheng be able to assist us? I'm only a small official, who received a bit of benefit from him. I've never harmed anyone and have never done anything evil before. God, why would I even want to offend Prince Yong Quan? I just want to...request for Duke Ming's help!"

"Tai Can, the reason why I'm asking you," Feng Ming thought for a long while before asking, "You asked me to save your brother-in-law not because of your sister, but also because of yourself, to satisfy your ambition? Were you planning on involving me in this from the beginning? If I were to rescue your brother-in-law, it would mean that I indirectly sided with Yong Cheng and it will increase the strength for him?"

If it was Feng Ming of three years ago, he might not utter these words.

But after going through many different situations, he found that using other people's lives in exchange for their own ambition was common. Since Rong Tian is no longer here, even if he's unwilling, he must be careful in speculating about everyone's ulterior motives.

He must train himself to be strong so that he can protect those around him and complete this journey peacefully.

TC: What is Duke Ming thinking of? I am a small official who pledged his loyalty to Prince Yong Cheng because I wanted someone of support, to live out my days peacefully, so how is there any other motives? My brother-in-law is currently in danger so how can I even think of taking advantage of the situation for my own gain? What kind of person would I be?

His voice trembled, filled with a hidden anger because of Feng Ming's misunderstanding of him.

After listening to him, Feng Ming nodded his head, "That's good. I have thought of a plan that can satisfy both sides, where everyone can be safe."

Tai Can was overjoyed, he asked excitedly, "What great idea did Duke Ming think of?"

"I want General Le Ting to comply with the edict from above, and handle the execution of your brother-in-law today."

Once the words were said, both Tai Can and Le Ting were shocked. Tai Can was stiff for a long time, his chubby face let out a hesitant smile, "This..this is the good idea? Duke Ming isn't joking around with me, are you?"

"I'm very serious, who says that I'm joking around?" Feng Ming put on a stern face and continued, "When we do this, it will protect General Le Ting from entering the black book of Prince Yong Quan. General Le Ting will follow according to the order received from above, though killing someone is not his intention, Third Prince Yong Cheng will surely understand, so he won't blame him."

Le Ting frowned, "But would this still be saving an innocent person or killing someone?"

Duke Ming just told him that he must save this innocent person and yet he has quickly forgotten about it?

"I only said to handle the execution, not to execute the person."

Le Ting vaguely guessed, "What Duke Ming mean is to pretend to comply with the order of execution, but secretly release Chao An?" He immediately shook his head and narrowed his eyebrows, "This idea is much easier said than done, the execution process has always been carried out in public. Two years ago, there was a prisoner who bribed the guards, using another person to undergo the punishment, and he was discovered. Therefore, before the prisoner is sent outside onto the execution ground, he will be identified once more. This matter is related to the Fen Cheng's pier post, I'm afraid that the whole process will be closely monitored by Prince Yong Quan's men, so it won't be easy to trick them."

Tai Can desperately nodded, looking nervous, he advised, "The execution ground is not an ordinary place, medical officials will examine the dead body. If there is a substitution or a fake death, all these tricks cannot be concealed from those veteran examiners."

Feng Ming was very confident, in high spirits he said, "Having a substitution or faking death are all old tricks, which can't be used to deceive them. This time, we will give those veteran medical examiners a new trick up our sleeves."

"A new trick?"

Feng Ming swept his eyes between the two men, licked his lips and gave them a smirk.

He was like a little kid ready to perform a big prank, he raised his chest and asked in a low voice, "Have you all played with magic before?"

END OF VOLUME 12